

Themes, motifs and symbols

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Themes, Motifs & Symbols Themes Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. The Ambivalence of Mastery Crusoe's success in mastering his situation, overcoming his obstacles, and controlling his environment shows the condition of mastery in a positive light, at least at the beginning of the novel. Crusoe lands in an inhospitable environment and makes it his home. His taming and domestication of wild goats and parrots with Crusoe as their master illustrates his newfound control. Moreover, Crusoe's mastery over nature makes him a master of his fate and of himself. Early in the novel, he frequently blames himself for disobeying his father's advice or blames the destiny that drove him to sea. But in the later part of the novel, Crusoe stops viewing himself as a passive victim and strikes a new note of self-determination. In building a home for himself on the island, he finds that he is master of his life—he suffers a hard fate and still finds prosperity. But this theme of mastery becomes more complex and less positive after Friday's arrival, when the idea of mastery comes to apply more to unfair relationships between humans. In Chapter XXIII, Crusoe teaches Friday the word "[m]aster" even before teaching him "yes" and "no," and indeed he lets him "know that was to be [Crusoe's] name." Crusoe never entertains the idea of considering Friday a friend or equal—for some reason, superiority comes instinctively to him. We further question Crusoe's right to be called "[m]aster" when he later refers to himself as "king" over the natives and Europeans, who are his "subjects." In short, while Crusoe seems praiseworthy in mastering his fate, the praiseworthiness of his mastery over his fellow humans is more doubtful. Defoe explores the link between the two in his depiction of the colonial mind.

The Necessity of Repentance Crusoe's experiences constitute not simply an adventure story in which thrilling things happen, but also a moral tale illustrating the right and wrong ways to live one's life. This moral and religious dimension of the tale is indicated in the Preface, which states that Crusoe's story is being published to instruct others in God's wisdom, and one vital part of this wisdom is the importance of repenting one's sins. While it is important to be grateful for God's miracles, as Crusoe is when his grain sprouts, it is not enough simply to express gratitude or even to pray to God, as Crusoe does several times with few results. Crusoe needs repentance most, as he learns from the fiery angelic figure that comes to him during a feverish hallucination and says, " Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die. " Crusoe believes that his major sin is his rebellious behavior toward his father, which he refers to as his " original sin, " akin to Adam and Eve's first disobedience of God. This biblical reference also suggests that Crusoe's exile from civilization represents Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. For Crusoe, repentance consists of acknowledging his wretchedness and his absolute dependence on the Lord. This admission marks a turning point in Crusoe's spiritual consciousness, and is almost a born-again experience for him. After repentance, he complains much less about his sad fate and views the island more positively. Later, when Crusoe is rescued and his fortune restored, he compares himself to Job, who also regained divine favor. Ironically, this view of the necessity of repentance ends up justifying sin: Crusoe may never have learned to repent if he had never sinfully disobeyed his father in the first place. Thus, as powerful as the theme of repentance is in the novel, it is nevertheless

complex and ambiguous. The Importance of Self-Awareness Crusoe's arrival on the island does not make him revert to a brute existence controlled by animal instincts, and, unlike animals, he remains conscious of himself at all times. Indeed, his island existence actually deepens his self-awareness as he withdraws from the external social world and turns inward. The idea that the individual must keep a careful reckoning of the state of his own soul is a key point in the Presbyterian doctrine that Defoe took seriously all his life. We see that in his normal day-to-day activities, Crusoe keeps accounts of himself enthusiastically and in various ways. For example, it is significant that Crusoe's makeshift calendar does not simply mark the passing of days, but instead more egocentrically marks the days he has spent on the island: it is about him, a sort of self-conscious or autobiographical calendar with him at its center. Similarly, Crusoe obsessively keeps a journal to record his daily activities, even when they amount to nothing more than finding a few pieces of wood on the beach or waiting inside while it rains. Crusoe feels the importance of staying aware of his situation at all times. We can also sense Crusoe's impulse toward self-awareness in the fact that he teaches his parrot to say the words, " Poor Robin Crusoe. . . . Where have you been? " This sort of self-examining thought is natural for anyone alone on a desert island, but it is given a strange intensity when we recall that Crusoe has spent months teaching the bird to say it back to him. Crusoe teaches nature itself to voice his own self-awareness.

Motifs Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Counting and Measuring Crusoe is a careful note-taker whenever numbers and quantities are involved. He does not simply tell us that his hedge

encloses a large space, but informs us with a surveyor's precision that the space is " 150 yards in length, and 100 yards in breadth. " He tells us not simply that he spends a long time making his canoe in Chapter XVI, but that it takes precisely twenty days to fell the tree and fourteen to remove the branches. It is not just an immense tree, but is " five foot ten inches in diameter at the lower part . . . and four foot eleven inches diameter at the end of twenty-two foot. " Furthermore, time is measured with similar exactitude, as Crusoe's journal shows. We may often wonder why Crusoe feels it useful to record that it did not rain on December 26, but for him the necessity of counting out each day is never questioned. All these examples of counting and measuring underscore Crusoe's practical, businesslike character and his hands-on approach to life. But Defoe sometimes hints at the futility of Crusoe's measuring—as when the carefully measured canoe cannot reach water or when his obsessively kept calendar is thrown off by a day of oversleeping. Defoe may be subtly poking fun at the urge to quantify, showing us that, in the end, everything Crusoe counts never really adds up to much and does not save him from isolation. Eating One of Crusoe's first concerns after his shipwreck is his food supply. Even while he is still wet from the sea in Chapter V, he frets about not having " anything to eat or drink to comfort me. " He soon provides himself with food, and indeed each new edible item marks a new stage in his mastery of the island, so that his food supply becomes a symbol of his survival. His securing of goat meat staves off immediate starvation, and his discovery of grain is viewed as a miracle, like manna from heaven. His cultivation of raisins, almost a luxury food for Crusoe, marks a new comfortable period in his island existence. In a way,

these images of eating convey Crusoe's ability to integrate the island into his life, just as food is integrated into the body to let the organism grow and prosper. But no sooner does Crusoe master the art of eating than he begins to fear being eaten himself. The cannibals transform Crusoe from the consumer into a potential object to be consumed. Life for Crusoe always illustrates this eat or be eaten philosophy, since even back in Europe he is threatened by man-eating wolves. Eating is an image of existence itself, just as being eaten signifies death for Crusoe. Ordeals at Sea Crusoe's encounters with water in the novel are often associated not simply with hardship, but with a kind of symbolic ordeal, or test of character. First, the storm off the coast of Yarmouth frightens Crusoe's friend away from a life at sea, but does not deter Crusoe. Then, in his first trading voyage, he proves himself a capable merchant, and in his second one, he shows he is able to survive enslavement. His escape from his Moorish master and his successful encounter with the Africans both occur at sea. Most significantly, Crusoe survives his shipwreck after a lengthy immersion in water. But the sea remains a source of danger and fear even later, when the cannibals arrive in canoes. The Spanish shipwreck reminds Crusoe of the destructive power of water and of his own good fortune in surviving it. All the life-testing water imagery in the novel has subtle associations with the rite of baptism, by which Christians prove their faith and enter a new life saved by Christ.

Symbols Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. The Footprint Crusoe's shocking discovery of a single footprint on the sand in Chapter XVIII is one of the most famous moments in the novel, and it symbolizes our hero's conflicted feelings about

human companionship. Crusoe has earlier confessed how much he misses companionship, yet the evidence of a man on his island sends him into a panic. Immediately he interprets the footprint negatively, as the print of the devil or of an aggressor. He never for a moment entertains hope that it could belong to an angel or another European who could rescue or befriend him. This instinctively negative and fearful attitude toward others makes us consider the possibility that Crusoe may not want to return to human society after all, and that the isolation he is experiencing may actually be his ideal state. The Cross Concerned that he will “lose [his] reckoning of time” in Chapter VII, Crusoe marks the passing of days “with [his] knife upon a large post, in capital letters, and making it into a great cross . . . set[s] it up on the shore where [he] first landed. . . .” The large size and capital letters show us how important this cross is to Crusoe as a timekeeping device and thus also as a way of relating himself to the larger social world where dates and calendars still matter. But the cross is also a symbol of his own new existence on the island, just as the Christian cross is a symbol of the Christian’s new life in Christ after baptism, an immersion in water like Crusoe’s shipwreck experience. Yet Crusoe’s large cross seems somewhat blasphemous in making no reference to Christ. Instead, it is a memorial to Crusoe himself, underscoring how completely he has become the center of his own life. Crusoe’s Bower On a scouting tour around the island, Crusoe discovers a delightful valley in which he decides to build a country retreat or “bower” in Chapter XII. This bower contrasts sharply with Crusoe’s first residence, since it is built not for the practical purpose of shelter or storage, but simply for pleasure: “because I was so enamoured of the place.” Crusoe

is no longer focused solely on survival, which by this point in the novel is more or less secure. Now, for the first time since his arrival, he thinks in terms of “pleasantness.” Thus, the bower symbolizes a radical improvement in Crusoe’s attitude toward his time on the island. Island life is no longer necessarily a disaster to suffer through, but may be an opportunity for enjoyment—just as, for the Presbyterian, life may be enjoyed only after hard work has been finished and repentance achieved.

Important Quotations Explained 1. “O drug!” said I aloud, “what art thou good for? Thou art not worth to me, no, not the taking off of the ground; one of those knives is worth all this heap; I have no manner of use for thee; e’en remain where thou art and go to the bottom as a creature whose life is not worth saving.” However, upon second thoughts, I took it away. . . .

Explanation for Quotation 1 >> Crusoe’s contradictory relationship with money is seen in this affirmation in Chapter VI, when he declares that the gold he discovers is worthless, only moments before hauling it away for safekeeping. He does the same thing many years later, expressing scorn for the treasure on the Spanish wreck, but then taking it to shore. The conflict between spiritual aims (scorning worldly wealth) and material ambitions (hoarding gold) reflects the novel’s tension between the practical and the religious. Moreover, Crusoe’s combination of disdain and desire for money is also interesting because Crusoe is conscious of his conflicted feelings only in a limited way. He calls money a drug and admits that he is addicted—but he is not interested in the way he fails to practice what he preaches. We see how Defoe’s focus in the novel is primarily on the practical rather than the psychological, despite the fascinating aspects of Crusoe’s mind. Crusoe’s

mixed feelings about the gold also reflect his nostalgia for human society, since he tells us that money has no value in itself, unlike the useful knives to which he compares it. It has only a social worth, and thus reminds us that Crusoe may still be a social creature despite his isolation. 2. My island was now peopled, and I thought myself very rich in subjects; and it was a merry reflection, which I frequently made, how like a king I looked. First of all, the whole country was my own mere property, Baso that I had an undoubted right of dominion. Secondly, my people were perfectly subjected. I was absolute lord and lawgiver, they all owed their lives to me, and were ready to lay down their lives, if there had been occasion of it, for me. Explanation for Quotation 2 >> This passage, from Chapter XXV, shows us Crusoe's astonishing ability throughout the novel to claim possession of things. He sells his fellow slave Xury to the Portuguese captain even though he has no claim of ownership over the boy. He seizes the contents of two wrecked ships and takes Friday as his servant immediately after meeting him. Most remarkably, he views the island itself as "my own mere property" over which he has "an undoubted right of dominion." We may wonder why he has no reason to at least doubt his right of dominion, but his faith in his property rights seems absolute. Moreover, Crusoe's conception of property determines his understanding of politics. He jokes about his "merry reflection" of looking like a king, but it seems more than a merry thought when he refers to "my people" being "perfectly subjected." Kingship is like ownership for Crusoe. He does not mention any duties or obligations toward his people. His subjects are for him like his possessions: he imagines them grateful for being owned, expecting nothing further from Crusoe. Of course,

this view is only Crusoe's presumption. It is hard to believe that the Spaniard sincerely sees himself as " perfectly subjected" to Crusoe, even if Crusoe does save his life. Nevertheless, Crusoe's personal point of view dominates the novel and shows us how deeply colonialism depended on a self-righteous, proprietary way of thinking.

3. I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise and, leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name " Crusoe, " and so my companions always called me.

Explanation for Quotation 3 >> Crusoe's opening words in Chapter I show us the fact-oriented, practical, and unsentimental mind that will carry him through his ordeal. Crusoe introduces his parents objectively through their nationalities, professions, and places of origin and residence. There is no hint of emotional attachment either here or later, when Crusoe leaves his parents forever. In fact, there is no expression of affection whatsoever. The passage also shows that leaving home may be a habit that runs in the family: Crusoe's father was an emigrant, just as Crusoe later becomes when he succumbs to his " rambling" thoughts and leaves England. Crusoe's originally foreign name is an interesting symbol of his emigrant status, especially since it had to be changed to adapt to English understanding. We see that Crusoe has long grasped the notion of adapting to one's environment, and that identities—or at least names—may change

when people change places. This name change foreshadows the theme of Crusoe's changing identity on his island, when he teaches Friday that his name is Master. 4. I might well say now indeed, that the latter end of Job was better than the beginning. It is impossible to express here the flutterings of my very heart when I looked over these letters, and especially when I found all my wealth about me; for as the Brazil ships come all in fleets, the same ships which brought my letters brought my goods. . . . Explanation for Quotation 4 >> Crusoe's comparison of himself to the biblical character Job in Chapter XXIX, after his return to England, reveals much about how he gives his ordeal religious meaning. In Crusoe's mind, his shipwreck and solitude are not random disastrous events but segments of an elaborate lesson in Christian patience. Like Job, whose faith was tested by God through the loss of family and wealth, Crusoe is deprived of his fortune while nevertheless retaining his faith in Providence. This passage also showcases Crusoe's characteristic neutral tone—the detached, deadpan style in which he narrates even thrilling events. Although he reports that the emotional effects make his heart flutter, he displays very little emotion in the passage, certainly not the joy expected of someone who suddenly becomes wealthy. The biblical grandeur of the original Job is lost in Crusoe's ordinary and conversational opening, " I might very well say now. " We see how Crusoe is far better suited to plodding and mundane everyday life than to dramatic sublimity. Even when the events call for drama, Crusoe seems to do all he can to make them humdrum. This emphasis on the ordinary was a new trend in English literature and is a major characteristic of the novel, which Defoe helped invent. 5. But no sooner were my eyes open, but I saw my Poll sitting

on top of the hedge; and immediately knew that it was he that spoke to me; for just in such bemoaning language I had used to talk to him, and teach him; and he learned it so perfectly that he would sit upon my finger and lay his bill close to my face, and cry, " Poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you? Where have you been? How come you here? " and such things as I had taught him. Explanation for Quotation 5 >> When Crusoe returns from his nearly fatal canoe trip in Chapter XVI to find his parrot calling his name, the scene expresses the pathos of having only a bird to welcome him home. Crusoe domesticates the bird in an attempt to provide himself with a substitute family member, as we learn later when he refers to his pets in Chapter XVII as his " family. " Poll's friendly address to his master foreshadows Friday's role as conversation partner in Crusoe's life. Crusoe's solitude may not be as satisfying as he lets on. Moreover, Poll's words show a self-pitying side of Crusoe that he never reveals in his narration. Teaching the bird to call him " poor" in a " bemoaning" tone shows that he may feel more like complaining than he admits in his story and that his Christian patience might be wearing thin. Poll's greeting also has a spiritual significance: it comes right after Crusoe's near-death experience in the canoe, and it seems to come from a disembodied speaker, since Crusoe imagines a person must be addressing him. It seems like a mystical moment until the words are revealed not to be God's, but Crusoe's own words repeated by a bird. Cut off from human communication, Crusoe seems cut off from divine communication too—he can only speak to himself. Study Questions 1. Defoe has his hero practice two different types of writing in the novel. One type is the journal that Crusoe keeps for a few chapters until his

ink runs out. The other is the fuller type of storytelling that makes up the bulk of the novel. Both are in the first-person voice, but they produce different effects. Why does Defoe include both types? What does a comparison between them tell us about the overall purpose of the novel?

Answer for Study Question 1 >> With his interest in practical details, Crusoe

naturally gravitates toward the journal as a form of writing. His idea of journal keeping follows the example of a captain's logbook rather than a personal diary: it is objective and factual, sometimes tediously so, rather than emotional or self-reflective. But Defoe could not sustain the whole novel

as a journal, since much of the moral meaning of the story emerges only retrospectively. Having survived his ordeal, Crusoe can now write his story

from the perspective of one remembering past mistakes and judging past behavior. The day-by-day format of the journal is focused on the present rather than the past, and it makes this kind of retrospection difficult. The

moral dimension of the novel can best be emphasized through a full autobiographical narrative, with Crusoe looking back upon earlier stages of life and evaluating them. 2. Crusoe expresses very little appreciation of

beauty in the novel. He describes the valley where he builds his bower as pleasant, recognizes that some of his early attempts at pottery making are unattractive, and acknowledges that Friday is good-looking. But overall, he

shows little interest in aesthetics. Is this lack of interest in beauty an

important aspect of the character of Crusoe, or of the novel? Answer for

Study Question 2 >> A marked indifference to beauty is indeed an important

feature both of Crusoe and of the novel. Not only does Crusoe devote little attention to the visual attractions of his Caribbean landscape, but he also

has hardly any interest in more abstract forms of beauty, such as beauty of character or of experience. Beautiful ideas like heroism or moral excellence, for example, rarely enter his head. Moreover, since Crusoe is in many ways a stand-in for the author, we can say that Defoe too seems resistant to aesthetics. This lack of attention to aesthetics is in large part his revolutionary contribution to English literature. Rejecting earlier views that the purpose of art is to embellish and make charming what is ordinary, Crusoe and Defoe show that novels can be profound by focusing on the humdrum, unattractive facts of everyday life that nevertheless are deeply meaningful to us. 3. Crusoe spends much time on the island devising ways to escape it. But when he finally does escape, his return to Europe is anticlimactic. Nothing he finds there, not even friends or family, is described with the same interest evoked earlier by his fortress or farm. Indeed, at the end of the novel Crusoe returns to the island. Why does Defoe portray the island originally as a place of captivity and then later as a desired destination? Answer for Study Question 3 >> Crusoe's ordeal is not merely the adventure tale it seems at first, but a moral and religious illustration of the virtues of solitude and self-reliance. At the beginning, Crusoe can only perceive his isolation as a punishment. But after his religious illumination, and after he has turned an uninhabited island into a satisfying piece of real estate, he learns to relish his solitude. His panic at the sight of a footprint shows how he has come to view other humans as threatening invaders of his private realm. His fellow humans in Europe undoubtedly also represent not the advantages of society, but the loss of empowered solitude, and so he dreams of returning to the island where he was king alone. Suggested Essay

Topics 1. Although he is happy to watch his goat and cat population multiply on his island, Crusoe never expresses any regret for not having a wife or children. He refers to his pets as his family, but never mentions any wish for a real human family. While he is sad that his dog never has a mate, he never seems saddened by his own thirty-five years of bachelor existence. Does Crusoe's indifference to mating and reproduction tell us anything about his view of life, or about the novel? 2. Although Crusoe proudly reports that he allows freedom of religion on his island, giving his Catholic and pagan subjects the right to practice their own faiths, he describes Friday as a Protestant. He attempts to rid his servant of his belief in the pagan god Benamuckee. Why does Crusoe generally show religious tolerance, but insist on Friday's Protestantism? 3. During the return voyage to England from Lisbon at the end of the novel, Crusoe and his traveling party encounter a bear that is frightening until Friday turns it into an amusing spectacle. His teasing of the bear, which prompts the group's laughter, is the first example of live entertainment in the novel. There is no mention of Friday trying to amuse Crusoe on the island. Does this episode foreshadow a new role for Friday after he moves to Europe from the Caribbean? What is Defoe trying to symbolize in having Crusoe bring Friday with him to Europe at all? 4. In many ways Crusoe appears to be the same sort of person at the end of the novel as he is at the beginning. Despite decades of solitude and exile, wars with cannibals, and the subjugation of a mutiny, Crusoe hardly seems to grow or develop. Is Crusoe an unchanging character, or does he change in subtle ways as a result of his ordeal? 5. Crusoe's religious illumination, in which he beholds an angelic figure descending on a flame, ordering him to repent or

die, is extremely vivid. Afterward he does repent, and his faith seems sincere. Yet Defoe complicates this religious experience by making us wonder whether it is instead a result of Crusoe's fever, or of the tobacco and rum he has consumed. We wonder whether the vision may be health- or drug-related rather than supernatural and divine. Why does Defoe mix the divine and the medical in this scene? Does he want us to question Crusoe's turn to religion?

Analysis of Major Characters Robinson Crusoe

While he is no flashy hero or grand epic adventurer, Robinson Crusoe displays character traits that have won him the approval of generations of readers. His perseverance in spending months making a canoe, and in practicing pottery making until he gets it right, is praiseworthy. Additionally, his resourcefulness in building a home, dairy, grape arbor, country house, and goat stable from practically nothing is clearly remarkable. The Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau applauded Crusoe's do-it-yourself independence, and in his book on education, *Emile*, he recommends that children be taught to imitate Crusoe's hands-on approach to life. Crusoe's business instincts are just as considerable as his survival instincts: he manages to make a fortune in Brazil despite a twenty-eight-year absence and even leaves his island with a nice collection of gold. Moreover, Crusoe is never interested in portraying himself as a hero in his own narration. He does not boast of his courage in quelling the mutiny, and he is always ready to admit unheroic feelings of fear or panic, as when he finds the footprint on the beach. Crusoe prefers to depict himself as an ordinary sensible man, never as an exceptional hero. But Crusoe's admirable qualities must be weighed against the flaws in his character. Crusoe seems incapable of deep

feelings, as shown by his cold account of leaving his family—he worries about the religious consequences of disobeying his father, but never displays any emotion about leaving. Though he is generous toward people, as when he gives gifts to his sisters and the captain, Crusoe reveals very little tender or sincere affection in his dealings with them. When Crusoe tells us that he has gotten married and that his wife has died all within the same sentence, his indifference to her seems almost cruel. Moreover, as an individual personality, Crusoe is rather dull. His precise and deadpan style of narration works well for recounting the process of canoe building, but it tends to drain the excitement from events that should be thrilling. Action-packed scenes like the conquest of the cannibals become quite humdrum when Crusoe narrates them, giving us a detailed inventory of the cannibals in list form, for example. His insistence on dating events makes sense to a point, but it ultimately ends up seeming obsessive and irrelevant when he tells us the date on which he grinds his tools but neglects to tell us the date of a very important event like meeting Friday. Perhaps his impulse to record facts carefully is not a survival skill, but an irritating sign of his neurosis. Finally, while not boasting of heroism, Crusoe is nonetheless very interested in possessions, power, and prestige. When he first calls himself king of the island it seems jocund, but when he describes the Spaniard as his subject we must take his royal delusion seriously, since it seems he really does consider himself king. His teaching Friday to call him “ Master, ” even before teaching him the words for “ yes” or “ no, ” seems obnoxious even under the racist standards of the day, as if Crusoe needs to hear the ego-boosting word spoken as soon as possible. Overall, Crusoe’s virtues tend to be private: his

industry, resourcefulness, and solitary courage make him an exemplary individual. But his vices are social, and his urge to subjugate others is highly objectionable. In bringing both sides together into one complex character, Defoe gives us a fascinating glimpse into the successes, failures, and contradictions of modern man. Friday Probably the first nonwhite character to be given a realistic, individualized, and humane portrayal in the English novel, Friday has a huge literary and cultural importance. If Crusoe represents the first colonial mind in fiction, then Friday represents not just a Caribbean tribesman, but all the natives of America, Asia, and Africa who would later be oppressed in the age of European imperialism. At the moment when Crusoe teaches Friday to call him “ Master” Friday becomes an enduring political symbol of racial injustice in a modern world critical of imperialist expansion. Recent rewritings of the Crusoe story, like J. M. Coetzee’s *Foe* and Michel Tournier’s *Friday*, emphasize the sad consequences of Crusoe’s failure to understand Friday and suggest how the tale might be told very differently from the native’s perspective. Aside from his importance to our culture, Friday is a key figure within the context of the novel. In many ways he is the most vibrant character in *Robinson Crusoe*, much more charismatic and colorful than his master. Indeed, Defoe at times underscores the contrast between Crusoe’s and Friday’s personalities, as when Friday, in his joyful reunion with his father, exhibits far more emotion toward his family than Crusoe. Whereas Crusoe never mentions missing his family or dreams about the happiness of seeing them again, Friday jumps and sings for joy when he meets his father, and this emotional display makes us see what is missing from Crusoe’s stodgy heart. Friday’s expression of

loyalty in asking Crusoe to kill him rather than leave him is more heartfelt than anything Crusoe ever says or does. Friday's sincere questions to Crusoe about the devil, which Crusoe answers only indirectly and hesitantly, leave us wondering whether Crusoe's knowledge of Christianity is superficial and sketchy in contrast to Friday's full understanding of his own god Benamuckee. In short, Friday's exuberance and emotional directness often point out the wooden conventionality of Crusoe's personality. Despite Friday's subjugation, however, Crusoe appreciates Friday much more than he would a mere servant. Crusoe does not seem to value intimacy with humans much, but he does say that he loves Friday, which is a remarkable disclosure. It is the only time Crusoe makes such an admission in the novel, since he never expresses love for his parents, brothers, sisters, or even his wife. The mere fact that an Englishman confesses more love for an illiterate Caribbean ex-cannibal than for his own family suggests the appeal of Friday's personality. Crusoe may bring Friday Christianity and clothing, but Friday brings Crusoe emotional warmth and a vitality of spirit that Crusoe's own European heart

lacks.

..... lord of the flies: Themes, Motifs & Symbols Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. Civilization vs. Savagery The central concern of Lord of the Flies is the conflict between two competing impulses that exist within all human beings: the instinct to live by rules, act peacefully, follow moral commands, and value the good of the group against the instinct to gratify one's immediate desires, act violently to obtain supremacy over others, and enforce one's

will. This conflict might be expressed in a number of ways: civilization vs. savagery, order vs. chaos, reason vs. impulse, law vs. anarchy, or the broader heading of good vs. evil. Throughout the novel, Golding associates the instinct of civilization with good and the instinct of savagery with evil. The conflict between the two instincts is the driving force of the novel, explored through the dissolution of the young English boys' civilized, moral, disciplined behavior as they accustom themselves to a wild, brutal, barbaric life in the jungle. *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel, which means that Golding conveys many of his main ideas and themes through symbolic characters and objects. He represents the conflict between civilization and savagery in the conflict between the novel's two main characters: Ralph, the protagonist, who represents order and leadership; and Jack, the antagonist, who represents savagery and the desire for power. As the novel progresses, Golding shows how different people feel the influences of the instincts of civilization and savagery to different degrees. Piggy, for instance, has no savage feelings, while Roger seems barely capable of comprehending the rules of civilization. Generally, however, Golding implies that the instinct of savagery is far more primal and fundamental to the human psyche than the instinct of civilization. Golding sees moral behavior, in many cases, as something that civilization forces upon the individual rather than a natural expression of human individuality. When left to their own devices, Golding implies, people naturally revert to cruelty, savagery, and barbarism. This idea of innate human evil is central to *Lord of the Flies*, and finds expression in several important symbols, most notably the beast and the sow's head on the stake. Among all the characters, only Simon seems to possess anything

like a natural, innate goodness. Loss of Innocence As the boys on the island progress from well-behaved, orderly children longing for rescue to cruel, bloodthirsty hunters who have no desire to return to civilization, they naturally lose the sense of innocence that they possessed at the beginning of the novel. The painted savages in Chapter 12 who have hunted, tortured, and killed animals and human beings are a far cry from the guileless children swimming in the lagoon in Chapter 3. But Golding does not portray this loss of innocence as something that is done to the children; rather, it results naturally from their increasing openness to the innate evil and savagery that has always existed within them. Golding implies that civilization can mitigate but never wipe out the innate evil that exists within all human beings. The forest glade in which Simon sits in Chapter 3 symbolizes this loss of innocence. At first, it is a place of natural beauty and peace, but when Simon returns later in the novel, he discovers the bloody sow's head impaled upon a stake in the middle of the clearing. The bloody offering to the beast has disrupted the paradise that existed before—a powerful symbol of innate human evil disrupting childhood innocence.

Motifs Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Biblical Parallels Many critics have characterized *Lord of the Flies* as a retelling of episodes from the Bible. While that description may be an oversimplification, the novel does echo certain Christian images and themes. Golding does not make any explicit or direct connections to Christian symbolism in *Lord of the Flies*; instead, these biblical parallels function as a kind of subtle motif in the novel, adding thematic resonance to the main ideas of the story. The island itself,

particularly Simon's glade in the forest, recalls the Garden of Eden in its status as an originally pristine place that is corrupted by the introduction of evil. Similarly, we may see the Lord of the Flies as a representation of the devil, for it works to promote evil among humankind. Furthermore, many critics have drawn strong parallels between Simon and Jesus. Among the boys, Simon is the one who arrives at the moral truth of the novel, and the other boys kill him sacrificially as a consequence of having discovered this truth. Simon's conversation with the Lord of the Flies also parallels the confrontation between Jesus and the devil during Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, as told in the Christian Gospels. However, it is important to remember that the parallels between Simon and Christ are not complete, and that there are limits to reading *Lord of the Flies* purely as a Christian allegory. Save for Simon's two uncanny predictions of the future, he lacks the supernatural connection to God that Jesus has in Christian tradition. Although Simon is wise in many ways, his death does not bring salvation to the island; rather, his death plunges the island deeper into savagery and moral guilt. Moreover, Simon dies before he is able to tell the boys the truth he has discovered. Jesus, in contrast, was killed while spreading his moral philosophy. In this way, Simon—and *Lord of the Flies* as a whole—echoes Christian ideas and themes without developing explicit, precise parallels with them. The novel's biblical parallels enhance its moral themes but are not necessarily the primary key to interpreting the story.

Symbols Symbols are objects, characters, figures, and colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts. The Conch Shell Ralph and Piggy discover the conch shell on the beach at the start of the novel and use it to summon the boys together after

the crash separates them. Used in this capacity, the conch shell becomes a powerful symbol of civilization and order in the novel. The shell effectively governs the boys' meetings, for the boy who holds the shell holds the right to speak. In this regard, the shell is more than a symbol—it is an actual vessel of political legitimacy and democratic power. As the island civilization erodes and the boys descend into savagery, the conch shell loses its power and influence among them. Ralph clutches the shell desperately when he talks about his role in murdering Simon. Later, the other boys ignore Ralph and throw stones at him when he attempts to blow the conch in Jack's camp. The boulder that Roger rolls onto Piggy also crushes the conch shell, signifying the demise of the civilized instinct among almost all the boys on the island.

Piggy's Glasses Piggy is the most intelligent, rational boy in the group, and his glasses represent the power of science and intellectual endeavor in society. This symbolic significance is clear from the start of the novel, when the boys use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and start a fire. When Jack's hunters raid Ralph's camp and steal the glasses, the savages effectively take the power to make fire, leaving Ralph's group helpless.

The Signal Fire The signal fire burns on the mountain, and later on the beach, to attract the notice of passing ships that might be able to rescue the boys. As a result, the signal fire becomes a barometer of the boys' connection to civilization. In the early parts of the novel, the fact that the boys maintain the fire is a sign that they want to be rescued and return to society. When the fire burns low or goes out, we realize that the boys have lost sight of their desire to be rescued and have accepted their savage lives on the island. The signal fire thus functions as a kind of measurement of the

strength of the civilized instinct remaining on the island. Ironically, at the end of the novel, a fire finally summons a ship to the island, but not the signal fire. Instead, it is the fire of savagery—the forest fire Jack’s gang starts as part of his quest to hunt and kill Ralph. The Beast The imaginary beast that frightens all the boys stands for the primal instinct of savagery that exists within all human beings. The boys are afraid of the beast, but only Simon reaches the realization that they fear the beast because it exists within each of them. As the boys grow more savage, their belief in the beast grows stronger. By the end of the novel, the boys are leaving it sacrifices and treating it as a totemic god. The boys’ behavior is what brings the beast into existence, so the more savagely the boys act, the more real the beast seems to become. The Lord of the Flies The Lord of the Flies is the bloody, severed sow’s head that Jack impales on a stake in the forest glade as an offering to the beast. This complicated symbol becomes the most important image in the novel when Simon confronts the sow’s head in the glade and it seems to speak to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart and promising to have some “ fun” with him. (This “ fun” foreshadows Simon’s death in the following chapter.) In this way, the Lord of the Flies becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast, a symbol of the power of evil, and a kind of Satan figure who evokes the beast within each human being. Looking at the novel in the context of biblical parallels, the Lord of the Flies recalls the devil, just as Simon recalls Jesus. In fact, the name “ Lord of the Flies” is a literal translation of the name of the biblical name Beelzebub, a powerful demon in hell sometimes thought to be the devil himself. Ralph, Piggy, Jack, Simon, and Roger Lord of the Flies is an allegorical novel, and

many of its characters signify important ideas or themes. Ralph represents order, leadership, and civilization. Piggy represents the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization. Jack represents unbridled savagery and the desire for power. Simon represents natural human goodness. Roger represents brutality and bloodlust at their most extreme. To the extent that the boys' society resembles a political state, the littluns might be seen as the common people, while the older boys represent the ruling classes and political leaders. The relationships that develop between the older boys and the younger ones emphasize the older boys' connection to either the civilized or the savage instinct: civilized boys like Ralph and Simon use their power to protect the younger boys and advance the good of the group; savage boys like Jack and Roger use their power to gratify their own desires, treating the littler boys as objects for their own amusement.

Important Quotations Explained 1. Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law.

Explanation for Quotation 1 >> This passage from Chapter 4 describes the beginnings of Roger's cruelty to the littluns, an important early step in the group's decline into savagery. At this point in the novel, the boys are still building their civilization, and the civilized instinct still dominates the savage instinct. The cracks are beginning to show, however, particularly in the willingness of some of the older boys to use physical force and violence to give themselves a sense of superiority over the smaller boys. This quotation shows us the psychological workings

behind the beginnings of that willingness. Roger feels the urge to torment Henry, the littlun, by pelting him with stones, but the vestiges of socially imposed standards of behavior are still too strong for him to give in completely to his savage urges. At this point, Roger still feels constrained by “parents and school and policemen and the law”—the figures and institutions that enforce society’s moral code. Before long, Roger and most of the other boys lose their respect for these forces, and violence, torture, and murder break out as the savage instinct replaces the instinct for civilization among the group. 2. His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink. Explanation for Quotation 2

>> This quotation, also from Chapter 4, explores Jack’s mental state in the aftermath of killing his first pig, another milestone in the boys’ decline into savage behavior. Jack exults in the kill and is unable to think about anything else because his mind is “crowded with memories” of the hunt. Golding explicitly connects Jack’s exhilaration with the feelings of power and superiority he experienced in killing the pig. Jack’s excitement stems not from pride at having found food and helped the group but from having “outwitted” another creature and “imposed” his will upon it. Earlier in the novel, Jack claims that hunting is important to provide meat for the group; now, it becomes clear that Jack’s obsession with hunting is due to the satisfaction it provides his primal instincts and has nothing to do with contributing to the common good. 3. “What I mean is . . . maybe it’s only us” Explanation for Quotation 3 >> Simon speaks these words in Chapter 5,

during the meeting in which the boys consider the question of the beast. One littlun has proposed the terrifying idea that the beast may hide in the ocean during the day and emerge only at night, and the boys argue about whether the beast might actually exist. Simon, meanwhile, proposes that perhaps the beast is only the boys themselves. Although the other boys laugh off Simon's suggestion, Simon's words are central to Golding's point that innate human evil exists. Simon is the first character in the novel to see the beast not as an external force but as a component of human nature. Simon does not yet fully understand his own idea, but it becomes clearer to him in Chapter 8, when he has a vision in the glade and confronts the Lord of the Flies. 4. " There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast. . . . Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! . . . You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are the way they are? " Explanation for Quotation 4 >> The Lord of the Flies speaks these lines to Simon in Chapter 8, during Simon's vision in the glade. These words confirm Simon's speculation in Chapter 5 that perhaps the beast is only the boys themselves. This idea of the evil on the island being within the boys is central to the novel's exploration of innate human savagery. The Lord of the Flies identifies itself as the beast and acknowledges to Simon that it exists within all human beings: " You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? " The creature's grotesque language and bizarre appropriation of the boys' slang (" I'm the reason why it's no go") makes the creature appear even more hideous and devilish, for he taunts Simon with the same colloquial, familiar language the boys use themselves. Simon, startled by his discovery, tries to convey it to the rest of the boys, but the

evil and savagery within them boils to the surface, as they mistake him for the beast itself, set upon him, and kill him. 5. Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of a true, wise friend called Piggy. Explanation for Quotation 5 >> These lines from the end of Chapter 12 occur near the close of the novel, after the boys encounter the naval officer, who appears as if out of nowhere to save them. When Ralph sees the officer, his sudden realization that he is safe and will be returned to civilization plunges him into a reflective despair. The rescue is not a moment of unequivocal joy, for Ralph realizes that, although he is saved from death on the island, he will never be the same. He has lost his innocence and learned about the evil that lurks within all human beings. Here, Golding explicitly connects the sources of Ralph's despair to two of the main themes of the novel: the end of innocence and the "darkness of man's heart," the presence of savage instincts lurking within all human beings, even at the Analysis of Major Characters Ralph Ralph is the athletic, charismatic protagonist of Lord of the Flies. Elected the leader of the boys at the beginning of the novel, Ralph is the primary representative of order, civilization, and productive leadership in the novel. While most of the other boys initially are concerned with playing, having fun, and avoiding work, Ralph sets about building huts and thinking of ways to maximize their chances of being rescued. For this reason, Ralph's power and influence over the other boys are secure at the beginning of the novel. However, as the group gradually succumbs to savage instincts over the course of the novel, Ralph's position declines precipitously while Jack's rises. Eventually, most of the boys except Piggy leave Ralph's group for Jack's, and Ralph is left alone

to be hunted by Jack's tribe. Ralph's commitment to civilization and morality is strong, and his main wish is to be rescued and returned to the society of adults. In a sense, this strength gives Ralph a moral victory at the end of the novel, when he casts the Lord of the Flies to the ground and takes up the stake it is impaled on to defend himself against Jack's hunters. In the earlier parts of the novel, Ralph is unable to understand why the other boys would give in to base instincts of bloodlust and barbarism. The sight of the hunters chanting and dancing is baffling and distasteful to him. As the novel progresses, however, Ralph, like Simon, comes to understand that savagery exists within all the boys. Ralph remains determined not to let this savagery overwhelm him, and only briefly does he consider joining Jack's tribe in order to save himself. When Ralph hunts a boar for the first time, however, he experiences the exhilaration and thrill of bloodlust and violence. When he attends Jack's feast, he is swept away by the frenzy, dances on the edge of the group, and participates in the killing of Simon. This firsthand knowledge of the evil that exists within him, as within all human beings, is tragic for Ralph, and it plunges him into listless despair for a time. But this knowledge also enables him to cast down the Lord of the Flies at the end of the novel. Ralph's story ends semi-tragically: although he is rescued and returned to civilization, when he sees the naval officer, he weeps with the burden of his new knowledge about the human capacity for evil. Jack The strong-willed, egomaniacal Jack is the novel's primary representative of the instinct of savagery, violence, and the desire for power—in short, the antithesis of Ralph. From the beginning of the novel, Jack desires power above all other things. He is furious when he loses the election to Ralph and continually pushes the

boundaries of his subordinate role in the group. Early on, Jack retains the sense of moral propriety and behavior that society instilled in him—in fact, in school, he was the leader of the choirboys. The first time he encounters a pig, he is unable to kill it. But Jack soon becomes obsessed with hunting and devotes himself to the task, painting his face like a barbarian and giving himself over to bloodlust. The more savage Jack becomes, the more he is able to control the rest of the group. Indeed, apart from Ralph, Simon, and Piggy, the group largely follows Jack in casting off moral restraint and embracing violence and savagery. Jack's love of authority and violence are intimately connected, as both enable him to feel powerful and exalted. By the end of the novel, Jack has learned to use the boys' fear of the beast to control their behavior—a reminder of how religion and superstition can be manipulated as instruments of power. Whereas Ralph and Jack stand at opposite ends of the spectrum between civilization and savagery, Simon stands on an entirely different plane from all the other boys. Simon embodies a kind of innate, spiritual human goodness that is deeply connected with nature and, in its own way, as primal as Jack's evil. The other boys abandon moral behavior as soon as civilization is no longer there to impose it upon them. They are not innately moral; rather, the adult world—the threat of punishment for misdeeds—has conditioned them to act morally. To an extent, even the seemingly civilized Ralph and Piggy are products of social conditioning, as we see when they participate in the hunt-dance. In Golding's view, the human impulse toward civilization is not as deeply rooted as the human impulse toward savagery. Unlike all the other boys on the island, Simon acts morally not out of guilt or shame but because he believes

in the inherent value of morality. He behaves kindly toward the younger children, and he is the first to realize the problem posed by the beast and the Lord of the Flies—that is, that the monster on the island is not a real, physical beast but rather a savagery that lurks within each human being. The sow's head on the stake symbolizes this idea, as we see in Simon's vision of the head speaking to him. Ultimately, this idea of the inherent evil within each human being stands as the moral conclusion and central problem of the novel. Against this idea of evil, Simon represents a contrary idea of essential human goodness. However, his brutal murder at the hands of the other boys indicates the scarcity of that good amid an overwhelming abundance of evil.