

Lord of the flies symbolism



Symbolism in Lord of the Flies Acclaimed author, William Golding, once said that his novel, Lord of the Flies, is symbolic from the very first page to the very last page and that throughout the course of the novel the meanings of the symbols are frequently changing, thus giving new interpretations of the symbols and the novel. Three of these key, persistently changing symbols of Lord of the Flies are the conch shell, which symbolizes order and power, Piggy's glasses, which symbolize intelligence and the ability to see things for what they truly are, and the signal fire, which symbolizes civilization and the hope of being rescued.

As the novel progresses, some of the symbolic items physical appearances, especially that of conch, follow the events of the novel and show what is happening to the ideas that the items symbolize. Throughout his novel, Lord of the Flies, William Golding includes many allegories and symbols, which change throughout the novel, to form the novel's overall symbolism of the island being a microcosm of the world and of society. Golding writes the conch shell, spotted by Piggy but claimed by Ralph, as a symbol of order, authority, power, and control.

The conch's symbolization of order and authority is shown through its use in calling tribe meetings and in its use as a talking stick, where only the boy holding the conch can be speaking. The symbolization of power and control is clearly shown when the tribe is holding an election for chief. The littluns, the youngest of the deserted boys, all scream out " Him with the shell. Ralph! Ralph! Let him be chief with the trumpet-thing. "(p. 22). The young boys recognize the conch as a source and symbol of power, just as the reader recognizes the conch being symbolic of power.

Over the course of the novel, the conch shell's physical appearance changes and mimics the boy's losing order in their island society. When the boys first find the conch shell, the appearance is described as " deep cream, touched here and there with fading pink. "(p. 16) The conch retains its natural appearance, just as the boys retain their civility and order. As the novel progresses, the boys fall deeper into savagery and find themselves disconnected from order and authority, especially as Jack begins to defy Ralph and pull away from the tribe.

This is marked as the conch beginning to fade in color and become almost transparent. The powerful conch is beginning to lose its power. At the end of the novel, the conch has become quite fragile and there is almost no order and authority left among the boys anymore. When Piggy is killed by Roger's boulder and the conch he so desperately tried to protect " exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist,"(p. 181) all order is lost and the boys become complete savages. The shell that symbolized authority and order is destroyed, as is the actual authority and order among the boys.

Power and control, in the form of the conch, are gone and the boys have reached the final stage in their decline toward savagery. Another important symbol of Lord of the Flies are Piggy's eyeglasses, which represent intelligence and the ability to see things as they truly are. Piggy, even with his myopia, could see what was best for the boy's island society. Piggy knew that the boys needed to " put first things first and act proper"(p. 45) in order to expect to be rescued. The other boys could not see this and were more focused on creating a fire first, which resulted in the boys causing the forest to burn.

Piggy constantly tried to get the boys to see things as they truly are, such as the boys' descent into savagery. The other boys, with their glassless faces and clouded judgments, could not see how far they were falling into savagery. But Piggy, with glasses could. Piggy was smart enough to try to preserve the old society's laws and orders by constantly reinforcing the rules of the conch shell and following the rules that he helped create. Piggy's glasses also symbolized intelligence, as their wearer was the most knowledgeable and intelligent of the boys.

Piggy was the real brain behind the tribe and he gave Ralph all of his ideas on how to run the tribe. Throughout the novel, the eyeglasses' symbolism changes, just as their appearance change. In the beginning of the novel, the eyeglasses are in perfect condition and there is still intelligence and the ability to see clearly in the tribe. The boys are still focused on creating the fire, with the help of Piggy's glasses, and being rescued. As the novel progresses and one side of Piggy's glasses break, the boys begin to lose their wisdom and their judgment becomes more clouded.

Jack and his choirboys become more focused on hunting and forming their own tribe than keeping a signal fire lit and being rescued. The boys begin to lose their wisdom of the civilized world and they begin to spiral deeper into savagery. Finally, Piggy's glasses are stolen from him and Piggy is killed. The voice of reason is gone, the intelligence of the society is killed, and the glasses are almost destroyed. The boys' judgment has become completely clouded and they continue to fall deeper into savagery as there is no wisdom or intelligence left on the island.

Without the glasses, the boys are blind and the island is plunged deeper into darkness when Jack's tribe begins to hunt Ralph. Through the course of the novel, the glasses come to not only symbolize intelligence and the ability to see things clearly, but the ability of the reader to see goodness on the island. Once Piggy is gone and the glasses are almost destroyed, the reader can no longer see a source of goodness on the island and the island is blinded by savagery and evilness. Finally, the signal fire symbolizes the boys' connection to society and their hope of being rescued.

The signal fire is a significant symbol because it not only symbolizes the societal connections and the hopes of being rescued, but it also keeps the boys alive as it provides warmth, protection, and a way to cook their food. Without the symbolic fire, the boys would have died long before their island society crumbled. Over the course of the novel, the signal fires symbolism changes. When the boys are first stranded on the island, their hopes of being rescued are incredibly high, especially because Ralph tells the boys that “ of course we shall be rescued” and “ that sooner or later a ship will put in here. (p. 37) Immediately after these remarks, the boys begin to build the signal fire, as they believe they will be rescued right away. The boys also still hold close ties to society and its rules, as shown in Roger not hitting the littlun, Henry, due to the “ taboo of the old life. ”(p. 62) Roger and the other boys are still civilized and have not become savages just yet. Hope is still alive that they will be rescued. As the boys' stay on the island becomes longer, they begin to lose hope that they will be rescued and the signal fire ceases to exist.

Ralph and Piggy, with their ties to society remaining and their hope still alive, try to keep the fire burning, but the other boys have become savages who have no ties to society and do not really want to be rescued. At the end of the novel, the boys have lost all ties to society and the fire is only used to cook food and provide warmth for the boys. The boys no longer have societal connections or a desire to be rescued. Ironically, the fire that the boys start to help them hunt Ralph turns into a signal fire when the British navy that was going by the island rescues them.

The critically acclaimed novel, *Lord of the Flies*, written by author William Golding after World War II, is one large allegorical novel on society that includes many smaller symbols that help develop the overall allegory.

Almost everything in the novel is symbolic and three of the key symbols are the powerful conch shell, Piggy's eyeglasses that are a source of intelligence and give the ability to see clearly, and the signal fire which connects the boys to society and gives them hopes of being rescued.

To further his novel's depth, Golding changes the symbols throughout the novel to match what they symbolize in the novel. By including so many key symbols in his novel, Golding adds depth to his novel and forms the island as a microcosm of the world and of society. With his symbols, Golding was able to write a novel that expressed his views of society being corrupt and that without order, civilization would cease to exist and would fall into savagery and primitivity.