

# Essay on religious allegory in lord of the flies

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In his dangerously revealing novel, *Lord of The Flies*, author William Golding explores human behavior in its purest, unadulterated form. From stranding a group of boys on an island to formulating a complex, inner "beast", Golding experiments with the notion of life outside society's limitations and the inevitable deterioration of order and civility that ensues. Throughout this journey, Golding unveils brutal truths about the boys' inherent savagery and insatiable urges, linking to several biblical stories: ultimately, to human kind. In *Lord of The Flies*, author William Golding employs religious allegory from three preeminent biblical stories: The Story of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Able, and of Jesus Christ to illuminate the fundamental flaws in human nature. Golding argues that the boys' constant dissension throughout the novel stems from a larger, more threatening evil within them: one, which brings to mind the story of Cain and Able. Due to his charisma and conviction, Ralph beats Jack in the race for chief.

Jack's boiling "mortification" (22) seen earlier in the book, is eventually released in a full-on attempt to kill Ralph: "He ran forward, stooping. 'I'm chief.' Viciously, with full intention, he [Jack] hurled his spear at Ralph" (180). In this sense, what was a petty jealousy has now become a motivation for murder: this resembles the idea of the beast, originating as a little'un's nightmare and with the boys' mounting fear, escalates to a ravenous darkness encasing the island. Furthermore, this attempted murder is done after Jack assumes the position of chief, revealing that his conduct stems from a personal anger towards Ralph rather than a means of achieving a goal. Likewise, Cain kills his brother Able out of a deep-seated feeling of spite and jealousy.

Finally, in Lord of The Flies as well as in the bible, the victims are murdered with “ full intention:” even when thinking clearly, Jack and Cain do not demonstrate sound, moral judgement. Towards the end of the book, officers arrive to rescue the boys and Ralph has the chance to study his surroundings: he fathoms a brutal truth, “...the other little boys began to shake and sob too...Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart...” (202). The undeniable pleasure of childhood: living young and unaware of depravity in the world has been stolen from the boys during their life on the island. The ruination of a beautiful land and the cold murder of two close friends have brought out a “ darkness in man’s heart” that the boys were not ready for. Because they understand this untamable evil within them, they “ weep” for the end of their own “ innocence” and days of simplistic living.

In Cain and Abel, Cain too cries after murdering his brother: he learns that he has a “ darkness” within him, which drives him to commit the ultimate sin, murder. Just as Adam and Eve were expelled from The Garden of Eden because of their overmastering impulse, the boys find their heavenly island in ruins as a result of their animalistic urges. Many times, Simon (the enigmatic, supposedly “ batty” child) retreats to a spot deep in the bed of the island: one that exhibits traits parallel to The Garden of Eden. “ The whole space was walled with dark, aromatic bushes, and was a bowl of heat and light...the deep sea...made an undertone less perceptible than the susurrations of the [boys’] blood” (56). This spot is “ walled” away to the other boys due to natural barriers, and Simon is the only human able to access this paradise: this, combined with the fact that Simon is the only boy

with a passive outlook towards the disgusting behavior on the island, prompts us to classify him as a variant of Adam—who too, was described as passive in the bible. In addition, Golding gives the island a heavenly, almost haunting atmosphere with “ dark bushes” and an ethereal combination of “ heat” and “ light.

” Its “ undertone,” bearing comparison to the “ susurrations of the boys’ blood” provides it with an additional, life-like quality: as the boys raze the island, they are not just damaging vegetation, they are slaughtering a living, breathing entity. Nevertheless, the end all fact of innocence, one of Golding’s foremost themes, fully corroborates this connection between the biblical story and Lord of The Flies: Just as Adam was deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, Simon suffers from the unshakable naivete of adolescence and is deceived by the belief that everything will end up “ all right” (111). Simon can be seen as a prophet who is betrayed by his own comrades in the same way Jesus was perceived as a diviner. A few nights prior to his murder, Simon finds himself talking to Ralph in a situation very similar to Jesus during his “ Last Supper”: “ Simon shook his head violently...” I just think you’ll get back all right’...and then they suddenly smiled at each other” (111). Simon reassures Ralph of his safety but says nothing of his own, suggesting that Simon senses his death is near: this prophetic vision into the future mirrors the biblical character Jesus and his otherworldly abilities.

Furthermore, Simon “ smiles” after predicting his own demise: to Simon, his own death is trivial if it means the survival of another boy. This solicitous, inconceivably selfless nature in Simon is what sets him high above the other characters in Lord of The Flies’ spectrum of morality—to a point, which

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borderlines “ batty”. Secondly, like Jesus set out to spread the word of God and was crucified, Simon endeavors to reveal new-knowledge concerning the boys’ “ beast”, and is killed in the process: “ It was crying out...about a body on the hill. At once the crowd...leapt on the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words...but the tearing of teeth and claws” (153). The boys surmise that Simon, who appears large and intimidating in the dark, is the beast, and they act on an inherent impulse of savagery.

While attacking Simon, Golding gives the boys characteristics such as “ claws” as a means of equating them to animals on a physical level. Furthermore, “ there were no words,” throughout the onslaught: without humanely deciding how to handle the “ beast”, the boys again convince us that they are animals—this time, on an intellectual level—and are incapable of fighting their bestial instincts. So, both through their physical appearance and merciless, highly irrational behavior, Golding fully relegates the boys to that of ferocious animals. Through the active use of religious allegory and biblical parallels, William Golding redefines his novel, adding a deeper and more personal level of dimension to what on the surface, appears as just an adventure story. The bible is universally seen as the pinnacle of moral guidance and judgment.

By interweaving situations in his novel to stories from the bible, Golding is able to juxtapose the boys and their deportment against what ethical standards the bible sets forward. Thus, since the boys and their actions ultimately equate to the some of lowest instances of morality in the bible, Golding’s original claim is corroborated: man is inherently evil.