

(Quasi) Socratic Seminar for *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

William Golding (1911 - 1993) was a British playwright, poet, and novelist who grew up in the years prior to WWI. This war changed people's attitudes about mankind. They no longer believed that people were essentially good-hearted, but rather evil. The atrocities of war made it difficult to believe in human innocence. This shift in thinking, together with Golding's own opinions after serving in WWII, is reflected in *Lord of the Flies*.

Students will be divided into pairs. They will pull numbers to determine which questions that they will answer and discuss for their peers.

Prerequisites: (1) Students should have already thoroughly read the text; (2) students should have the teacher any questions prior to the seminar; (3) students must be prepared to answer questions from peers and the teacher.

1. What (or who) influenced William Golding to write *Lord of the Flies*? Explain how an author's experiences might shape his or her writing.
2. What are at least two possible themes of the book? What excerpts from the novel support your answer?
3. How does the author use the setting to develop characterization?
4. How does the setting affect the characters in the story? What evidence can you cite from the text? Why do you think Golding used an island for the setting? What does it symbolize?
5. Who are the three main characters of the story? For each character, name two examples from the story that reveal his personality and his sense of morality.

6. What is a general synopsis of the plot? Give specific events from each part of the plot? (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution)
7. Name five literary devices used in *Lord of the Flies*. Give specific parts of the novel when they are used.
8. Give an example of foreshadowing in the book. Thoroughly explain the excerpt you choose that supports your answer.
9. What is irony? Give at least one example of it from the novel?
10. At the beginning of the novel, why does the conch shell take and retain such a powerful symbolic value?
11. What are examples of symbolism from the novel? How does the author use them to develop the story?
12. Explain the significance of the title, *Lord of the Flies*.
13. Why do the boys have to paint their faces to do evil deeds?
14. When there were only four of them, Ralph still blew the conch to start the final assembly. Why did he do this?
15. What weapons did Ralph and Jack use in their fight at the end and how is the choice of weapon symbolic?
16. Why did Golding choose a choir as Jack's group?
17. How is fear used in the novel? Give at least two examples of incidents of when and how fear influenced the plot and characters.
18. Why did Golding write the book with the main characters as children?
19. Explore the meaning of Golding's frequent repetition of the colors, red/pink or blue/white in *Lord of the Flies*. What does he accomplish through such emphasis by repetition?
20. Of all the characters, it is Piggy who most often has useful ideas and sees the correct way for the boys to organize themselves. Yet the other boys rarely listen to him and frequently abuse him. Why do you think this is the case? In

what ways does Golding use Piggy to advance the novel's themes?

21. The sow's head and the conch shell each wield a certain kind of power over the boys. In what ways do these objects' powers differ? In what way is *Lord of the Flies* a novel about power? About the power of symbols? About the power of a person to use symbols to control a group?
22. What are the different kinds of conflict in the book? How are they resolved (or are they)?
23. What makes Jack a powerful leader? How do you think Golding wants you to respond to Jack?
24. What role do the littluns play in the novel? In one respect, they serve as gauges of the older boys' moral positions, for we see whether an older boy is kind or cruel based on how he treats the littluns. But are the littluns important in and of themselves? What might they represent in our world? Why?
25. Why does Ralph cry at the end of the novel? Why had he never cried before? What does his crying symbolize?

Deeper Reflection (All students)

"Fear is the enemy for civilization; fear prevents construction and progress." Do you agree? Discuss the fragility of civilization against the destructive powers of fear.