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How thin is the veneer of civilization?William Golding's chilling 1954 novel, Lord of the Flies, strands British schoolboys on a desert island, not for adventure, but to dissect the darkness that emerges when societal structures collapse.Witnessing their descent from order to primal savagery raises profound questions about human nature.We've collected 70 pivotal Lord of the Flies quotes and organized them by core themes of struggle between civilization and savagery, the loss of innocence, the pervasiveness of fear, and the corrupting nature of power.Explore the lines that chart the boys' terrifying journey and reveal the inherent fragility of the rules they try to uphold.As the boys acclimate to the island, the initial hopefulness quickly gives way as the primal instincts inherent within them begin to surface, challenging the fragile order they attempt to impose.The Struggle: Civilization vs. SavageryGolding masterfully pits the desire for order, rules, and rescue against the allure of unchecked freedom, hunting, and tribalism. This elemental conflict defines the novel's central tension and explores the precariousness of societal norms. "Sticks to you ass-mar!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 1, Page 13Ralph's early dismissal of Piggy's vulnerability, while childish, foreshadows the group's later, more dangerous disregard for weakness and authority. "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack), Chapter 2, Page 42Golding employs stark irony here; Jack, the eventual embodiment of savagery, initially invokes nationalism and the concept of rules to assert his claim to leadership. "The rules!" shouted Ralph. "Because the rules are the only thing we've got!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Dialogue: Ralph to Jack), Chapter 5, Page 91Ralph desperately articulates the vital importance of rules as the symbolic barrier against chaos, recognizing their power even as their practical authority disintegrates. See how Ralph champions the fight for order. "Bollocks to the rules! We're strong – we hunt! If there's a beast, we'll hunt it down! We'll close in and beat and beat and beat!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack), Chapter 5, Page 91Jack's raw declaration signifies his complete rejection of the democratic process and reasoned debate in favor of primal strength and violence. "Which is better – to be a pack of painted Indians like you are, or to be sensible like Ralph is?.. Which is better, law and rescue, or hunting and breaking things?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 11, Page 180Piggy's final, poignant appeal to reason encapsulates the novel's core conflict, tragically highlighting the boys' fatal choice of violent tribalism over civilization. Explore Piggy's consistent voice of intellect here. "Are we savages or what?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 11, Page 170"The world, that understandable and lawful world, was slipping away." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator), Chapter 5, Page 91 "What are we? Humans? Or animals? Or savages?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 5, Page 91 "If I blow the conch and they don't come back... We'll be like animals... If you don't blow, we'll soon be animals anyway." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Dialogue: Ralph and Piggy), Chapter 5, Page 92The conch shell is a powerful symbol of democratic order, its influence waning as the boys descend into savagery. Trace the conch's symbolic journey and meaning. "The conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator), Chapter 11, Page 181 The physical destruction of the conch, coinciding with Piggy's murder, represents the irreversible loss of reason, law, and civilized discourse on the island. "Roger stooped... threw it to miss... Yet there was a space round Henry... into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life." Roger was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins. –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Roger), Chapter 4, Page 62This crucial moment reveals the fading power of internalized societal rules, showing Roger testing boundaries he will later obliterate.Golding relentlessly illustrates how easily the structures of civilization can crumble, revealing the potent allure of savagery beneath.The Nature of Humanity & Inherent Darkness (The Beast)The central, terrifying discovery in the novel is that the "beast" the boys fear is not an external creature, but the inherent capacity for evil and violence residing within human nature, unleashed by fear and the absence of societal constraints. "Maybe there is a beast... maybe it's only us." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Simon), Chapter 5, Page 89Simon's quiet, profound realization cuts through the boys' externalized fears to identify the true source of the island's corruption: their own innate darkness. This insight elevates him but also isolates him. Delve into Simon's unique perception and fate. "There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast. ..." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The Lord of the Flies to Simon), Chapter 8, Page 143 "Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill! You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The Lord of the Flies to Simon), Chapter 8, Page 143The disembodied pig's head, the "Lord of the Flies," explicitly confirms Simon's intuition, personifying the inherent evil and potential for savagery within the seemingly innocent boys. "The half-shut eyes were dim with the infinite cynicism of adult life." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator describing the pig's head), Chapter 8, Page 137 "They were black and iridescent green... and in front of Simon, the Lord of the Flies hung on his stick and grinned... his gaze was held by that ancient, inescapable recognition." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Simon's encounter), Chapter 8, Page 138 "He knelt among the shadows and felt his isolation bitterly. They were savages it was true; but they were human." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Ralph's thoughts), Chapter 12, Pages 185, 186 "Ralph went for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Ralph), Chapter 12, Page 202Ralph's final realization is devastating; the loss is not merely of life but of innocence itself, acknowledging the inherent "darkness of man's heart" revealed on the island. "Unless we get frightened of people." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy concluding dialogue with Ralph), Chapter 5, Page 84The island strips away the boys' societal conditioning, revealing the raw, often brutal, core of human nature beneath.Loss of Innocence and IdentityThe island environment acts as a catalyst, accelerating the boys' transition from naive schoolchildren to hardened survivors, participants in violence, and carriers of a terrible knowledge. Their identities are tragically reshaped. "This is our island. It's a good island. There will be no grownups come to fetch us we'll have fun." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 2, Page 35This early quote embodies the initial naive optimism and sense of play before the island's—and their own—darker nature asserts itself. "He snatched his knife out of the sheath and slammed it into a tree trunk. Next time there would be no mercy." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Jack), Chapter 1, Page 31Jack's initial hesitation to kill the piglet gives way to performative violence—a crucial step in suppressing his civilized conscience and embracing the hunter persona. "The mask was a thing on it's own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Jack), Chapter 4, Page 64The anonymity granted by the painted mask is psychologically liberating for Jack, allowing him to fully shed his former identity and inhibitions, unleashing his primal desires without shame. Trace Jack's chilling transformation here. "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Chant by: Jack and his hunters), Chapter 4, Page 69 "His mind was crowded with memories... knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Jack), Chapter 4, Page 70 "Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Kill the pig! Bash him in!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Chant by: The hunters, including Ralph), Chapter 7, Page 114The ritualistic chant becomes a hypnotic force, unifying the group in bloodlust and demonstrating how even Ralph, the symbol of order, can be momentarily swept up in the collective savagery. "This was a savage whose image refused to blend with that ancient picture of a boy in shorts and a shirt." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator describing a hunter), Chapter 12, Page 183 "They accepted the pleasures of morning... life so full that hope was not necessary and therefore forgotten." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator), Chapter 4, Page 58 "... they grew accustomed to these mysteries and ignored them, just as they ignored the miraculous, the throbbing stars." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator), Chapter 4, Page 58 "He became absorbed beyond mere happiness as he felt himself exercising control over living things... gave him the illusion of mastery." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Henry), Chapter 4, Page 61 "That's right. We was on the outside. We never done nothing, we never seen nothing." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy about Simon's death), Chapter 10, Page 158 Piggy's desperate attempt at denial highlights the unbearable weight of guilt and the boys' inability to process their horrific actions. "The edge of the lagoon became a streak of phosphorescence... Softly, surrounded by a fringe of inquisitive bright creatures... Simon's dead body moved out towards the open sea." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator describing Simon's body), Chapter 9, Pages 153, 154Golding uses poetic, almost beatific imagery to describe Simon's departure, contrasting the island's lingering natural beauty with the boys' brutal act, emphasizing the profound loss of innocence and spiritual insight. On the island, the established hierarchy of the schoolyard transforms into a deadly power struggle, where fear becomes the ultimate tool of control.Power, Leadership, and FearThe absence of adult authority creates a vacuum quickly filled by a struggle for dominance. Leadership styles diverge sharply, with Ralph representing democratic order and Jack embodying authoritarian control achieved through manipulating fear and appealing to base instincts. "I ought to be chief... because I'm chapter chorister and head boy. I can sing C sharp." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack), Chapter 1, Page 22Jack's initial, almost absurd claim to leadership relies on irrelevant status from the old world, immediately revealing his inherent desire for power and position. "His specs – use them as burning glasses!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack), Chapter 2, Page 40Jack recognizes the practical power embodied in Piggy's glasses—the ability to create fire—foreshadowing his later theft of them to control the essential resource for survival and comfort. Fire itself becomes a potent symbol. Analyze the complex symbolism of fire here. "Acting like a crowd of kids!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 2, Page 38 "How can you expect to be rescued if you don't put first things first and act proper?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 2, Page 45 "I thought I might kill." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack), Chapter 3, Page 51 "People don't help much." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph to Jack), Chapter 3, Page 54 "They walked along, two continents of experience and feeling unable to communicate." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Ralph and Jack), Chapter 3, Page 55 "There is nothing in it of course. Just a feeling. But you can feel as if you're not hunting, but – being hunted, as if something's behind you all the time in the jungle." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack to Ralph and Simon), Chapter 3, Page 53Jack admits to a primal fear, hinting at the psychological toll of the hunt and the encroaching sense of unseen menace on the island. "We've got to talk about this fear and decide there's nothing in it." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 5, Page 82 "The thing is, fear can't hurt you any more than a dream." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Jack), Chapter 5, Page 82Jack attempts to dismiss fear rationally but ironically uses the boys' fear of the beast to consolidate his power and justify the hunt. "I'm scared of him," said Piggy... He hates you too, Ralph. "... He can't hurt you, but if you stand out of the way he'd hurt the next thing. And that's me." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Dialogue: Simon, Piggy, Ralph), Chapter 5, Page 93 "As long as there's light we're brave enough." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 8, Page 125 "Now you do one. It. You been rude about his hunters." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy to Ralph about Jack), Chapter 8, Page 125 "We can do without 'em. We'll be happier now, won't we?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy about Jack's tribe), Chapter 8, Page 131 "... what makes things break up like they do?" Piggy... "I expect it's him." "Jack?" "Jack." ... "Yes," he said, "I suppose it must be." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Dialogue: Ralph and Piggy about Jack), Chapter 8, Pages 139, 140Despite the encroaching darkness, flickers of insight, enduring connections, and a persistent yearning for the lost world of order and reason continue to surface, highlighting the complexity of the boys' internal struggles.Wisdom, Perception, and HopeAmid chaos, characters like Piggy and Simon serve as voices of reason, perception, and fragile hope, though their wisdom is often tragically unheeded by the increasingly savage majority. "Didn't you hear what the pilot said? About the atom bomb? They're all dead." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 1, Page 14Piggy immediately introduces the harsh reality of the outside world's conflict, grounding the boys' predicament in a larger context of societal collapse. "That little 'un that had a mark on his face—where is he now? I tell you I don't see him." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 2, Page 46Piggy's pragmatic, almost bureaucratic observation underscores the first tangible consequence of the group's irresponsibility with the fire, foreshadowing greater losses. "Give me my specs?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 2, Page 41 "He wanted to explain how people were, but there's nothing in it." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 5, Page 82 "The flames, as though they were a kind of wild life, crept as jaguar creeps on its belly toward a line of birch-like saplings that bedged an outcrop of the pig rock." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator), Chapter 2, Page 44 "If you could shut your ears to the slow suck down of the sea... then there was a chance that you might put the beast out of mind and dream for a while." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator), Chapter 7, Page 109 "Ralph... would treat the day's decisions as though he were playing chess. The only trouble was that he would never be a very good chess player." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Ralph), Chapter 7, Page 117 "The greatest ideas are the simplest. Now there was something to be done they worked with passion." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator about Ralph/Piggy), Chapter 8, Page 129 "But nobody else understands about the fire. If someone threw you a rope when you were drowning... you would, wouldn't you?" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph), Chapter 8, Page 139 "I dunno, Ralph. We just got to go on, that's all. That's what grown-ups would do." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy), Chapter 8, Page 139 "Come away. There's going to be trouble. And we've had our meat." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Piggy to Ralph), Chapter 9, Page 151 "If only one had time to think!" –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: Ralph's thoughts), Chapter 12, Page 195 "The officer, surrounded by these noises, was moved and a little embarrassed. He turned away to give them time to pull themselves together; and waited, allowing his eyes to rest on the trim cruiser in the distance." –William Golding, Lord of the Flies, (Character: The narrator, near final line), Chapter 12, Page 202The naval officer's arrival represents an abrupt intrusion of the adult world, yet his slight embarrassment and focus on the cruiser hint at the adults' distance from the raw savagery he has encountered, suggesting the darkness is not confined to the island.Conclusion: The Enduring EchoThese 70 quotes from Lord of the Flies chart the harrowing descent from societal hope into primal fear and savagery. They expose the fragility of rules, the corrupting nature of power, the loss of innocence, and the inherent darkness within humanity. Explore All Lord of the Flies AnalysisA Note on Page Numbers & Edition: Like fear, these quotes resonate across editions, but page numbers WILL inevitably differ. All citations (e.g., Chapter 1, Page 13) reference the Penguin Books, December 16, 2003, Mass Market Paperback edition (ISBN-13: 978-039501487). Always verify page numbers against your specific copy for academic precision, lest your references become as elusive as the boys' rescue. 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. 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. 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, 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 . . ." 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?" 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 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. 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 height of civilization. Source: Written by: Nick RedgroveReviewed by: Kate LeeUpdated on 17 June 2025Remember the assessment objectives explicitly state that you should be able to "use textual references, including quotations". This means summarising, paraphrasing, referencing single words and the referencing of plot events are all as valid as quotations in demonstrating that you understand Lord of the Flies. It is important that you remember that you can evidence your knowledge of the text in these two equally valid ways: both through references to it and direct quotations from it. Overall, you should aim to secure a strong knowledge of the text, rather than rehearsed quotations, as this will enable you to respond to any question you may be set. It is the quality of your knowledge of Golding's novel which will enable you to select references effectively. If you are going to revise quotations, the best way is to group them by character, or theme. Below you will find definitions and analysis of the best quotations, arranged by the following themes: Civilisation versus savagery/Good versus evil/Religion/Power and leadership/Perhaps the central concern of Lord of the Flies is a question: is it more natural for human beings to work together and create a community (civilisation), or do people naturally tend towards their individualistic impulses (savagery)? "And another thing. We can't have everybody talking at once. We'll have to have 'Hands up like at school' - Ralph, Chapter 2Meaning and contextThis quotation comes as Ralph attempts to settle the group of boys down in one of their first meetingsAnalysisAt this point in the novel, the boys are presented as unruly and excitable, full of nervous energyRalph and Piggy attempt to establish order in the group by convening meetings and instituting rules (such as "hands up"/In Lord of the Flies, meetings and rules symbolise society: Meetings and rules also represent an attempt to create a community with shared values:Paired quotations: "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood." - The hunters, Chapter 4"At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore." - Narrator, Chapter 9Meaning and contextThe first quotation is a refrain that Jack's choir chant after their first successful huntThe second refers to the actions of the entire group of boys during the murder of SimonAnalysisThese two quotations show the boys' descent into savageryAs soon as Jack's hunters make their first kill, they become more primal, and begin ritual dances, ceremonies and chants: This can be seen as "uncivilised", akin to savageryThis chant is monosyllabic, suggesting that the boys' own language is less civilised; it also visceral ("throat", "blood") and violent, again suggesting savageryAs the novel progresses, the actions of the boys towards each other becomes more violent and savage:Before Simon's murder, a boy called Robert is almost killed when a ritual dance becomes violentHere, during Simon's murder, the boys descend on him - no longer a boy but a "beast" - in an animalistic manner:They use "teeth" and "claws" and "bit, tore" at Simon "The mask was a thing on its own, behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness." - Narrator, Chapter 4Meaning and contextThis quotation describes Jack when he is on his own in the jungle, using soil as face paint to create a kind of maskIt suggests that once he is hidden by the face paint, he feels free from the normal rules of civilised societyAnalysisAt this point in the novel, the boys (even Jack's emerging tribe) still feel constrained by society's rules regarding behaviour:Golding suggests that these social norms give us a healthy dose of "shame" and "self-consciousness" He is suggesting that without these social norms guarding our impulses, we can easily become savagesThis quotation marks a turning-point for Jack, because it signifies that he is turning his back on the rules and conventions of civilised society:From now on, he feels free to act however he pleases"The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist." - Narrator, Chapter 11Meaning and contextThis quotation describes both the killing of Piggy and the destruction of the conch shell when Ralph and Piggy look to reason with Jack on Castle RockAnalysisGolding deliberately decides to kill off Piggy and the conch shell at the same time in Chapter 11, as both represent a symbolic death:He is the island's intellectual and always urges Ralph to think logically when making decisionsHis death, therefore, represents the death of a chance at reconciliation or negotiation between the two camps of boysThis links to Charles Darwin's ideas of survival of the fittestWith it now destroyed, no other voice but Jack's has authorityThis represents a victory of autocracy over democracy (which has "ceased to exist")Piggy's death represents the death of rational thinking, of reason:Piggy's death also represents the ultimate victory of the strong over the weak:The destruction of the conch represents the death of free speech and democracy on the island:In many ways, Lord of the Flies is a morality tale exploring the two sides of human nature. Golding is exploring whether evil is inherent in human beings, or whether it is learnt. Ultimately, his view is a pessimistic one: he seems to suggest that all human beings have a natural capacity for evil. Paired quotations: "The creature was a party of boys" - Narrator, Chapter 1 "What I mean is...maybe it's only us" - Simon, Chapter 5Meaning and contextThe first quotation is the first description of Jack's choir - later the hunters - as seen by Ralph and PiggyThe second quotation is stated by Simon when the boys are discussing the possibility that a beast exists on the islandAnalysisThroughout the novel, Golding suggests that any evil that exists on the island comes not from any external monster, but from the boys themselvesIndeed, from the very first description of the characters in Lord of the Flies who represent human evil (Jack and his choir) we see them compared to a "creature". This metaphor foreshadows the evil that the boys will commit against each other later in the novelIt also alerts readers to the fact that there is no external monster at allGolding uses the character of Simon to express his own opinions:Simon says that the creature is "only us", suggesting that the boys are creating the monster in their own headsHowever, it could also suggest that all evil on the island is perpetrated by "only" the boys themselves, and that the boys are a danger to each otherThis is reflective of Golding's larger argument that human beings have a natural capacity for evil"Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry - threw it to miss" - Narrator, Chapter 4Meaning and contextThis quotation describes an episode when Roger spears on a couple of littluns on the beach, and then begins to throw stones at one of themAnalysisGolding suggests that all humans have a capacity for evil, and no character encapsulates this more than RogerHere, Golding describes Roger's desire to commit acts of violenceHowever, he is still conditioned by society's rules and social norms not to hurt the littlun Henry, but instead to throw to "miss"However, this episode foreshadows a later change to Roger's inhibitions:Later, Roger has no hesitation in committing acts of violence against the boys when he acts as Jack's torturer-in-chief on Castle RockGolding's deliberate reference to a "stone" here foreshadows the rock that Roger launches from Castle Rock that kills PiggyGolding is suggesting, therefore, that it is only society's unwritten rules that prevent people like Roger committing acts of dreadful violence"Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart" - Narrator, Chapter 12Meaning and contextThis is a description of Ralph after he learns that a naval officer has come to rescue the boys from the islandAnalysisRalph - despite his occasional impulsiveness and immaturity - is one of the novel's most reflective characters:Earlier in the novel, the morning after Simon's murder, he acknowledges his own part in the killing (unlike Piggy, who refuses to accept responsibility) Here, he reflects on the actions and behaviour of the entire group, and cries as he realises how terrible they have become (how far they have come from being "innocent" children)Ralph's weeping is prompted by coming in contact with a figure who represents the society he tried - and failed - to recreate on the islandThe naval officer represents order, rules and all grown-ups (who are often referred to and symbolise the society they have come from)Ralph's feelings are perhaps Golding's own:It could be argued that Golding believes that there is evil inherent in "man's heart"Some people assume that Lord of the Flies is a religious allegory, but this reading is perhaps too simple: instead, Golding seems to explore the complex relationship between the inner nature of human beings and external value systems, such as Christianity. "Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach" - Narrator, Chapter 3Meaning and contextThis comes after Simon has worked with Ralph building huts for the group - here, he is described picking fruit for the younger childrenAnalysisIt can be argued that Simon is used by Golding not just to represent absolute human goodness, but also as a representation of Jesus Christ:Here, Simon giving food to those who cannot feed themselves is reminiscent of the Biblical tale of the feeding of the 5,000Like Jesus, Simon aims to help those less fortunate than himself, getting the fruit the littluns "could not reach"However, unlike Jesus, Simon cannot inspire others to perform good deeds:Golding seems to be reverencing the idea of divine grace, which is where the actions of God (or Jesus) inspires other good acts by those that witness themLike Jesus, Simon is killed by his peers, but this doesn't result in a change of behaviour in the boys, nor does Simon return:There is no resurrection; Simon's death is finalThis could be Golding suggesting that even external value systems like Christianity cannot shift the boys' embracing of savagery "He's queer. He's funny. He's funny" - Ralph, Chapter 3Meaning and contextRalph calls Simon strange in a conversation with Jack, after Simon has walked offAnalysisIt is telling that even though Ralph has consistently said that Simon is the only boy that has helped him, he refers to him pejoratively behind his back:Simon has just helped Ralph build huts all day:However, he describes him as "queer", meaning strange, which instantly isolates Simon from the rest of the groupThis rejection of Simon, despite his focus on community and his altruism, perhaps reveals Golding's true feelings about human nature:Instead of being embraced, Simon, this Christ-like figure, is marginalised:He is marginalised even by the character - Ralph - who sees the value in society and cooperation the mostThis suggests that Golding believes that human beings naturally reject community in favour of individualismGolding uses the two characters of Ralph and Jack to represent two styles of leadership: Ralph symbolises democracy, while Jack represents authoritarianism. Ultimately, Golding seems to suggest that - although it does more harm than good - people are more attracted to the powerful rule of autocracy.Paired quotations: "We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages" - Jack, Chapter 2 "We'll have rules!" - Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks 'em" - Jack, Chapter 2Meaning and contextThe first quotation comes during one of the first meetings held by the boys, where Ralph and Jack attempt to establish orderThe second quotation is stated by Jack later in the same meetingAnalysisThis pair of quotations, both stated during the same episode of the novel, reveals Jack's attitude to rules:While Ralph and Piggy look to establish rules and responsibilities to benefit the group as a whole, Jack revels in the prospect of creating rules in the first place:When Jack talks of creating rules he isn't thinking about how they might benefit others! Jack makes the rules then he gains authority!If anyone breaks these rules, Jack believes he has the right to punish the boys if "anyone breaks 'em" - These quotations foreshadow Jack's authoritarianism and desire for absolute power later in the novel!The second quotation also foreshadows his capacity for violence and torturePaired quotations: "Which is better - to have rules and agree, or to hunt and kill?" - Piggy, Chapter 11"Bollocks to the rules! We're strong - we hunt!" - Jack, Chapter 5Meaning and contextThe first quotation comes as Piggy and Ralph look to reason with Jack on Castle Rock, just before Piggy is killedThe second quotation is stated by Jack in an argument he has with Ralph about how the island is being runAnalysisThe first quotation neatly sums up Golding's central question in Lord of the Flies: do humans naturally prefer to pull together for the community as a whole, or act as individuals following their base instincts?Ralph and Piggy represent the first idea ("have rules and agree" = civilisation)Jack, Roger and the hunters represent the second ("hunt and kill" = savagery)Piggy's desperate plea here in Chapter 11 also allows Golding to contrast the leadership styles of Ralph and Jack:Ralph has attempted throughout the novel to establish rules that work for all of the boysPiggy also uses the word "agree", which refers to the idea of consensus and democracyJack, on the other hand, prioritises personal freedom!He rejects the rules from early on in the novel ("Bollocks to the rules!") in favour of his own individual desires ("we hunt")Ultimately, Golding suggests that humanity's desire for personal freedom wins out over the compromise, or sacrifice, involved with agreeing and having rules!Did this page help you? Ralph and Piggy meet up with each other after escaping from a shot down plane. The two spots a conch shell and Ralph use it to call all the other boys who also escaped the shot down plane to meet up and set rules and Ralph is now elected as chief. Ralph calls for another meeting where he notice that there are no adults on the island and they are completely alone and stranded. new rules were set, like who ever hold the conch gets to speak. Ralph suggests making a signal fire, which would help them if they get rescued. While Jack was busy tracking up the pig down, Ralph and Simon are constructing huts on the beach. Jack disagrees with Ralph stating that, hunting is more important than making huts. in this chapter Jack decent see the necessity of things to keep them all alive. Jack gets a hold of all the boys to go hunting, when Ralph sees a ship approaching he looks up to see no smoke coming from the signal fire and is not being watch. On the other hand Jack and his hunters have their first kill and the boys have their first meal.