



# **LORD OF THE FLIES DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION**

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## LORD OF THE FLIES DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

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How far does Golding present the boys as evil in the story?

Write about:

- what happens to the boys on the island
- how far Golding presents the boys as evil

[30 marks]

AO4 [4 marks]





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## LORD OF THE FLIES DIAGNOSTIC MODEL ESSAY

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“From the Second World War we learned something... It taught us not fighting, politics, or the follies of nationalism, but about the given nature of man”, remarked William Golding. Simon’s words, “Maybe there is a beast... Maybe it’s only us”, appear to symbolise this idea and, perhaps, Golding is presenting a question to his readers: ‘is evil an external factor, or is it innate in humankind?’ To this end, the school children on the uninhabited island in a tropical area offered Golding an opportunity to reconstruct R.M. Ballantyne’s well-known story of adventure described in *Coral Island*, to further probe the question of ‘nature versus nurture’. Therefore, it could be argued that Golding uses language, structure and form to reflect the topic of nature versus nurture with the purpose of encouraging us to recognise the evil that he believed lay within man, as a first step to getting rid of it.

Golding most powerfully portrays evil through the character Jack. For example, in chapter 5, his colloquial exclamation, “bollocks to the rules!”, could imply a number of interesting ideas; for instance, the noun “bollocks” illustrates Jack’s disregard for the rules of civilisation, while simultaneously foreshadowing his reversion to savagery as the novel progresses, and eventually culminates in the hunt of Ralph as well as the destruction of the island in the denouement. Jack’s disregard for the rules equates to his disregard for his society’s ruler, Ralph and if we view this idea through Freud’s theories of psychology, we could perceive Jack as the ‘id’ which suggests that he follows his instinctual desires rather than logic. Perhaps, from this perspective, Golding is suggesting that Jack’s disdain for self-control represents a more universal human impetus that leads to savagery because it holds the rules and laws that provide social stability in contempt. Additionally, Golding emphasises Jack being a hunter over someone who values law and order, thus demonstrating his growing desire for power and to create a place where personal desires trump law and order. Jack’s propensity for following his desires is a trait that provides a catalyst for the decline of the society created on the island. However, he also serves as a vehicle through which Golding explores his perspectives of the realities of evil; Jack appears to symbolise Golding’s view that evil is inherent in the entirety of humankind. By placing the children alone on the island, Golding appears to illustrate the idea that civilisation only suppresses and hides this evil through nurturing, however, without societal nurturing, human evil inevitably exposes itself.

With the feeling of isolation becoming stronger each day, the boy's well groomed appearances and personality start to change for the worse as they destroy their environment and themselves along with it. We also witness an increase in aggressiveness in their play fighting; they put on war paint and develop increasingly menacing war chants eventually causing death, murder and sorrow to follow. “Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood”. The vicious list of verbs, “Kill, Cut and Spill” emphasise the gruesome atmosphere they are surrounded with as they deteriorate into savagery. It also imitates Golding’s obsession with death and mankind due to his experiences of war and the cruelty he has seen surrounded by cold hearted people. Evil, here, is presented as the driving force towards savagery, death and fear. The evil within the characters causes their selfish desires to take control of the island and also diminishes humans' inherent good, shown by characters such as Simon, who is seen as the epitome of kindness.

Golding uses language, structure and form to discuss the topic of nature versus nurture with the purpose of questioning whether evil is an external or internal factor. The loss of innocence and the reversion into savagery (especially towards the end of the novel) emphasises the power of inherent evil within humanity. The characters’ inherent natural evil, as portrayed through Jack and his hunters, seems to overcome the power of the pure and innocent nature of Ralph, Simon and Piggy who acts as contrasts to the Hunters; Simon and Piggy end up dead and Ralph is only saved from Jack’s newfound power via the miraculous arrival of the sailor right at the end. Golding remarked that the scene at the end where Ralph is fleeing from the fire on the island is not simply about the boy being hunted down, but that the whole natural world is being destroyed. The picture of destruction is an atomic one where the destruction of the island represents the ‘rape’ that Golding believed man was doing to the whole great





globe. Thus, the story is an illustration of Golding's concern at the brutality that human beings were subjecting each other and the world in which they live. However, when Ralph and the boys weep for the 'end of innocence' at the end, Golding is, perhaps, suggesting that, although the text may seem pessimistic, this new-found awareness of evil is actually the first step towards getting rid of it. Ralph and the little boys had not earlier wept, for they had not been fully aware of the nature of evil. Now that they weep for the end of innocence and for the darkness of man's soul, perhaps this represents a second chance for them and for civilisation all together, to recognise, in Golding's view, mankind's inherent evil, so that, in Golding's own words, 'we learn to see the rape of our planet for the preposterous folly that it is', so, perhaps, we can begin the search for the love that Golding believed humanity was in desperate need of.

