

Lord of the Flies, by William Golding

A Radical Intro

Lord of the Flies is the work of a European-Catholic bigot who secretly maintained an insane, superstitious worldview inherited from Christian tradition. None of his characters were meant to be treated as heroes. Why? Because none of the child characters practiced their Christian faith – the faith they presumably practiced while they were in England, where they attended a Christian school, as the crosses on their uniforms reveal.

The Christian schoolboys are stranded on a tropical island rich in fruit trees. Incredibly, this is not an idle detail. From the Christian tradition, fruit trees represent the greatest temptation. This tradition, by the way, was created because Christian civilization destroyed tree-based, indigenous economies and replaced them with economies founded on grasses: wheat, millet, sugarcane, etc. In other words, the tropical island and all its fruit trees do not merely serve as an exotic setting; they represent evil.

The story ends with a symbolic apocalypse as the island is consumed by fire. An ironic reading might treat this as prophetic of Global Warming, but Golding only had the Christian eschatological myth of the end of the world in his head.

Christian Symbols and Titles

The cross
Fire = Hell
Water = baptism, holy water, etc.
Fruit = forbidden
The Lord of the Flies = Satan
Beast & beastie = Satan
Snake = Satan
(The) father = God
Rescue/Save = salvation, going to Heaven

The Seven Sins -- Piggy is guilty of which ones?
Pride, Gluttony, Wrath, Lust, Greed, Envy, Sloth

Metaphor Analysis

Beast: The beast, the Lord of the Flies, represents Satan, who – for Catholics like Golding – is real but not material or merely physical. Satan's greatest trick is to persuade people that he, the beast, does not exist and that evil only exists in this or that person or object. In other words, since Simon planned to tell the children that the beast did not really exist, he deserved to die.

Conch: The conch shell symbolizes authority, but this authority is given to Ralph without his having done anything to earn it and having no special leadership qualities. Ralph is much less of a

leader than Jack, but that does not mean Golding thought he was inferior to Jack. Ralph was cruel towards Piggy and incapable of saving their followers.

Facepaint: This is the excuse many of the boys use for living as hunting savages, instead of civilized English citizens. Golding's racism is blatant.

Fire/Smoke: The smoke of the signal fire symbolizes technology – the false god in whom the boys invest their hope for salvation.

Glasses: The glasses with which the fires are started symbolizes technology.

The association between the expression "Lord of the Flies" and the devil can be traced back to the Scriptures where the word Baal-zebub/Beelzebub appears. This word was first used in the Old Testament and in Hebrew the literal meaning of Baal is lord and Zebub is a large destructive fly. In the New Testament, which was originally written in Greek, Baal-zebub is Beelzebub, or Beelzeboul, a name used in reference to Satan.

Theme Analysis

The theme of *Lord of the Flies* has been questioned and speculated about for decades. To answer the critics, Golding said that the theme was to trace the problems of society back to the sinful nature of man. He wrote the book to show how [secular] political systems cannot govern society effectively without first taking into consideration the defects of human nature. *Of course, this cynical and derogatory view of human nature betrays the author's Catholic belief that all human beings are born as sinful creatures, having inherited sin from the first human beings.*

The defects of human nature are exemplified in Golding's novel through the characters of Jack and his hunters. If left alone to fend for themselves, they will revert back to the savage roots of their ancestors. This is seen in the novel near the end, when the tribe is hunting Ralph. Matters had become quite out of hand by this time. Even the naval officer who saves the boys knows their society has become savage.

Yet Golding's last comment in his press release criticizes not only the boys on the island but also the society of adults in which the officer lives. Golding asks— while the ship saves the boys from killing each other, who will save the ship from killing other ships or being killed? In this way the society of the outside world mirrors the island society on a larger level. Remember that the novel takes place during World War II. Golding got the idea for the book because of his experiences in the war, where he served in the Navy and learned the inherent sinfulness of man. It's interesting that the war is mentioned indirectly at the beginning and end of the novel but nowhere in between. This is a remarkable literary device of Golding.

After reading any significant portion of this site, it will become obvious that Piggy and Jack symbolize two opposite extremes of human behavior while Ralph is pulled between these philosophies. Piggy demands adherence to the rules of his auntie while Jack subscribes to the

philosophy, "If it's fun, do it." Ralph empathizes with parts of both sides; that is why he walks the tight rope. Eventually he seems to side with Piggy, but actually Ralph never changes his philosophy— it is Jack and the rest of the boys who become more extreme in theirs (hunting humans, forming their own tribe, etc.). In this way Ralph portrays the role of government in any modern society. While he wants to satisfy the wishes of the public, he must also realize that certain rules of behavior must be followed in order to prevent anarchy.

Unfortunately anarchy defeats order. This is the outcome because Golding believed that [a secular] government is an ineffective way to keep people together. No matter how logical or reasonable, government will eventually have to give in to the anarchical demands of the public.

Colonial Hypocrisy

Mr. Golding imagined a world in which people living on an island turn into savages because they lack civilized traditions. In reality, civilized peoples such as the British have a history of savagely killing less civilized island peoples. The hypocrisy is stunning. Here are a few examples:

Genocide on Three Islands and one Archipelago -

British genocide of the people of Tasmania:

http://combatgenocide.org/?page_id=146

Spanish genocide of the natives of the Bahamas:

<http://liberationschool.org/the-legacy-of-christopher-columbus/>

U.S. genocide of the people of the Philippines:

<https://britsinthephilippines.top/philippines-genocide-3-million-filipinos-killed/>

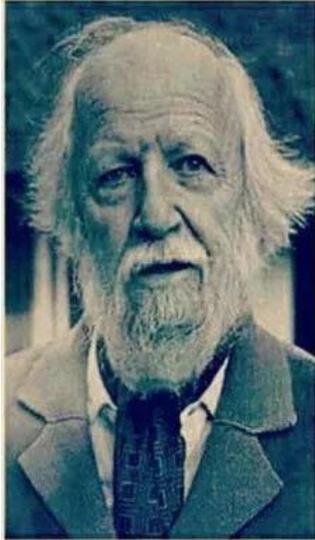
Maori genocide of fellow islanders due to European influence:

<http://www.worldhistoryblog.com/2008/01/genocide-of-moriori-on-chatham-islands.html>

A Book of Prejudice

1. Sexism? Where are the women? Are they not important to telling a story about humanity? This is a topic you can reflect on without searching for relevant quotations, for I think none exist. You might, however, consider this:

Now here's a man who understands women.....



William Golding
British Novelist, Playwright & Poet
1911 --1993

I think women are foolish to pretend they are equal to men. They are far superior and always have been. Whatever you give a woman, she will make greater. If you give her sperm, she will give you a baby. If you give her a house, she will give you a home. If you give her groceries, she will give you a meal. If you give her a smile, she will give you her heart. She multiplies and enlarges what is given to her. So, if you give her any crap, be ready to receive a ton of shit!

I think Golding had a good, traditional wife and a sexist sense of humor. This quotation, while apparently humorous, implies that women do nothing on their own initiative; they always depend on men to give them something first. What do you think?

2. Racism. Note Golding's use of the words dark, white, fair, golden, to describe skin and their connection to good and evil characters.
3. Negative portrayals of nature and the forest. From the first page, the forest is dark and filled with noises like witches' screams.
4. Negative portrayal of democracy. Golding's illustration of the island politics suggests that a strong leader is necessary and that everyone must obey him and his laws. Discussion is never useful. Elections and voting are unnecessary. The children (who symbolize adults) are not capable of thinking rationally.
5. Negative portrayal of native traditions. Making masks and face painting are connected to fear and a desire to hide one's true emotions. Dancing and drumming is constantly given negative associations.
6. Unscientific: claiming that children without adults and religion (Christianity) devolve into savages.

