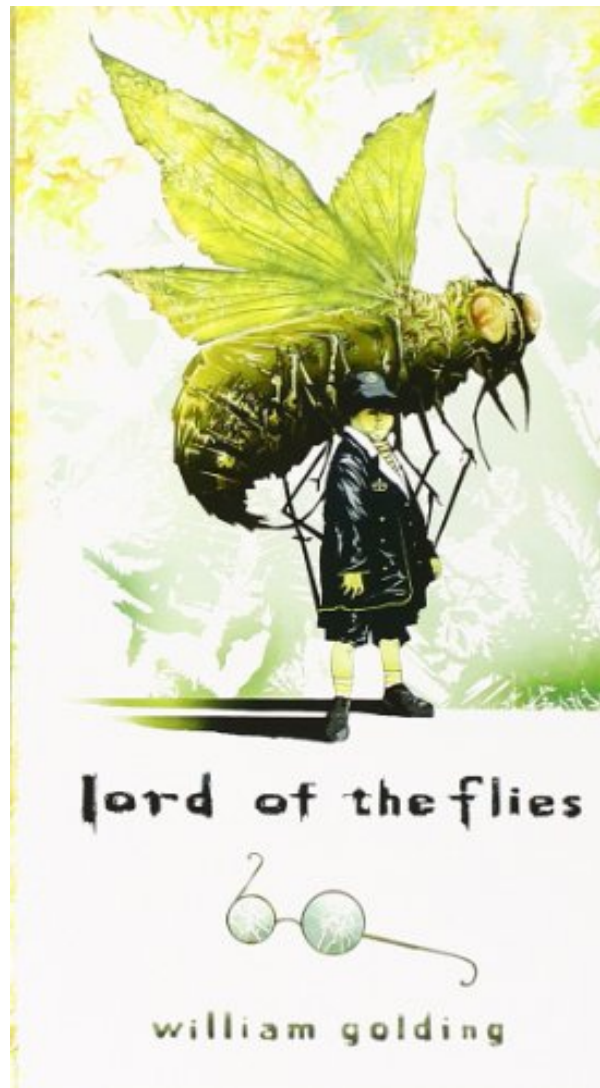


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Before The Hunger Games there was Lord of the Flies

Lord of the Flies remains as provocative today as when it was first published in 1954, igniting passionate debate with its startling, brutal portrait of human nature. Though critically acclaimed, it was largely ignored upon its initial publication. Yet soon it became a cult favorite among both students and literary critics who compared it to J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* in its influence on modern thought and literature.

William Golding's compelling story about a group of very ordinary small boys marooned on a coral island has become a modern classic. At first it seems as though it is all going to be great fun; but the fun before long becomes furious and life on the island turns into a nightmare of panic and death. As ordinary standards of behaviour collapse, the whole world the boys know collapses with them—the world of cricket and homework and adventure stories—and another world is revealed beneath, primitive and terrible. Labeled a parable, an allegory, a myth, a morality tale, a parody, a political treatise, even a vision of the apocalypse, *Lord of the Flies* has established itself as a true classic.

"*Lord of the Flies* is one of my favorite books. That was a big influence on me as a teenager, I still read it every couple of years."

—Suzanne Collins, author of *The Hunger Games*

"As exciting, relevant, and thought-provoking now as it was when Golding published it in 1954."

—Stephen King

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Features

- Great book!

Most helpful customer reviews

89 of 94 people found the following review helpful.

A close look into the dark depths of the human heart

By UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY WILDCATS IQ author

I taught this book in my sophomore English class. I started each unit with a "free-for-all" day, an entire class period in which I said nothing, gave no instructions, and wore a sign that read "I'm closed for repairs." I did this with ten different classes and each time chaos ensued. As soon as students realized I was present but not really there, they tested the limits with what they could and could not do. Since I told myself that I would only break character if a student's well-being was at stake, the students quickly realized they could get away with a lot. Leaders emerged and some kids tried to be somewhat productive, but the outcome was always dismal and disturbing. One time all the desks were piled into one heap as if they were going to be a part of one giant bonfire. This was always an interesting introduction to the book since the students quickly made the connections when they started reading the book. I am a very positive person by nature and tend to see the best in people, so some of the truths in this book are hard for me to acknowledge. However, Golding hits us with the reality of our hearts smack dab between the eyes. This book is a fascinating read that will force you to look closely within your own heart while also reminding you to be a little more cautious when trusting other people's intentions.

154 of 172 people found the following review helpful.

A manual for societal behavior and expectations

By Judy K. Polhemus

"Lord of the Flies" is singularly the most important novel for required reading, whether assigned in school or self-imposed. It regularly appears as number one on my own list of best books.

Let's play "What if." What if a plane carrying a full load of school boys crashes on a deserted island with no adult survivors? What would happen to those boys? What would you expect to happen?

William Golding works with this premise: an idyllic setting, innocent schoolboys. One boy, an older boy just short of teenage years, a boy with fair hair, assumes leadership to stir the others into some semblance of organization and survival mode, much like adults would do if adults were present. He also saw a need to defuse the web of fear of the younger ones. Where are we? How long will we need to wait before someone comes for us? All questions with no answers at this time.

Ah, yes, Golding tells us, everything goes well for a while. But remember the "scar" made by the crashing plane? Something ugly is on this island (but it's not the scar). It's in the bushes, in the dark, in the depths, in the depths of hearts, and it grows like the malignancy it is.

A blatant revelation of what is about to come occurs when Roger silently and stealthily watches a young'un, unbeknownst to the little child. All the young'un is doing is running a stick through the sand, disturbing a crab in a tiny pool of water. Even he imposes control and fear on a helpless creature as Roger boldly picks up a couple of rocks and tosses them the youngster's way. He deliberately misses but comes closer with each throw. Next time he will probably hit the young boy, but not yet. This taboo--deliberately and unnecessarily causing pain to one smaller than you--has not been broken--yet.

Although the dance of the spears, the primeval chants, the attack and killing of the pig, then feasting on its flesh, their kill, are shocking acts of savagery, this event is foreshadowed by the seemingly innocent lob of the stones. From a casual incident, but one with eventual intentionality, the ritualistic slaughter is not so far-fetched or surprising. Golding prepares his readers. This is how the chaos of society starts. It begins with one simple disconnect from the rules. It begins in the minds and hearts. Will I do what society expects? Will I follow the rules to keep things running and working? Do I break a rule or two for my own enhancement. Will I feel a power surge if my rock hits that young `un?

Ralph would probably speak of the terror of knowing that rules WILL be broken. He would speak of the utter horror that any rule can be and will be broken and he won't live to tell about it. Just ask Piggy.

This novel is the only one I taught over and over during the twelve years I worked with high school seniors. My other choices I would switch around those years, drop some, add some. This one I kept. It is that important. I think of "Lord of the Flies" as a necessary manual for societal behavior and an effort to keep the chaos of evil at bay.

Is it even necessary to ask how many times that rock has been thrown since this novel was published in the 1950's? Or how much chaos has imploded so many lives?

Like the way of manuals, some remain in circulation and are deeply read; others fall by the wayside out of disinterest. Some are thrown in the trash. "Lord of the Flies"--what is its current status? And society--how is it doing? Reader, are you a little bit fearful?

79 of 94 people found the following review helpful.

Human Nature through the eyes of William Golding

By Timothy_Froh

With this his first novel, author William Golding wrote a novel that he could never surpass in greatness. Lord of the Flies is a novel about our human nature. Too often I think, people jump to quick conclusions about the book and Golding's stand on human nature. "His stance is too pessimistic" or "That books really gross." What these people fail to realize is that Golding tried to paint a picture of human nature as he saw it. He wasn't making things up, I don't think he was particularly angry, he wrote Lord of the Flies to expose people to the atrocities that he witnessed in World War II.

One of the largest underlying principles in Lord of the Flies is of course, human nature. William Golding gives the reader three interesting characters to analyze: Jack, Piggy, and Ralph. It's quite apparent as you read the novel that Golding must have read a little Sigmund Freud before writing Lord of the Flies. Let's start with Jack. Jack is the definite Id on the island. He wants to survive but he also wants to eat meat and have fun. Jack is clearly unable to control these urges and in turn has a pretty large influence on the other boys on the island. Piggy is the definite Superego on the island. Piggy is always referring to "well my auntie..." and always finds an excuse not to do something. Piggy has no intentions of satisfying his id, and in turn influences only Ralph and Simon. Ralph on the other hand, takes the middle road. He is clearly trying to find a way to satisfy his id, but he can't seem to find one. Take what he said in chapter eight for instance: "...Without the fire we can't be rescued. I'd like to put on war-paint and be a savage. But we must keep the fire burning..." Ralph is definitely trying to satisfy his id, but those laws of culture still remain with him, telling him it's not the thing a proper English boy should do.

Another interesting connection I made while reading, was one between Jack's status of leader and the ideology of Thomas Hobbes. Unlike Hobbes though, Jack's power was used for quite the opposite affect. Hobbes believed that in order for a perfect society to exist, a higher power had to be in charge, in order to keep the other citizens in check. Jack was that higher power on the island. He was in control of everything, however, his power had quite the opposite affect of "keeping people in check." Jack used the powerful persuasion of the id to persuade others. Jack could promise meat and fun, whereas Ralph could promise labor and fruit, something the other boys definitely didn't want.

Lord of the Flies is also a novel filled with symbolism. Probably the most important of these symbols was the conch. The conchs represented several things, including freedom and order on the island, and possibly, even for a short time, unity between the boys. One of the most interesting aspects to the conch was the fact that Piggy couldn't use it. This shows a lack of leadership or strength on Piggy's part. The conch became a tool of free speech. Those who wanted to speak at the tribal council had to hold the conch in order to be heard. However, as the story progressed, this practice diminished more and more, until the island was a place

of complete chaos and anarchy. In one of the last chapters of the novel, the conch gets completely destroyed. This symbolizes two things. First, it symbolizes the end of order on the island- no more meetings, no more assemblies, none of that, the island was a place of anarchy. Secondly, this destruction symbolizes the end of Ralph's leadership. The boys had become slaves to Jack and his power, their conscience gave in. Finally, about the novel itself. Golding is quite obviously a fan of Joseph Conrad. The writing style is almost identical, and the subject matter is very similar, with Golding opting to use children (young boys) instead of the men of Conrad's Heart of Darkness. The novel moves very quickly and it's rather short (202 pages in my copy.) You'll be immersed in the varying characters and degrees of humanity that they present. Keep in mind, that although Golding's view on humanity may seem very pessimistic, he's writing from his perspective on human nature, something that he witnessed first hand during WWII.

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