

Golding's aim

What Golding is saying is that there is no essential difference between the island world and the adult one. The children reveal the same nature as the grown-ups. In fact the child's world on the island is a painful microcosm of the adult world, for the ruin they bring upon themselves is universal. After all it is atomic warfare in the air that has brought them to the island.

According to Golding:

The whole book is **symbolic** in nature except the rescue in the end where adult life appears, dignified and capable, but in reality enmeshed in the same evil as the symbolic life of the children on the island. The officer, having interrupted a manhunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cruiser which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?

It is Golding's intention in *Lord of the Flies* to tell a true story - to expose the **beast** within every one of us and tell a realistic story - "a book" as he put it "about real boys on an island, showing what a mess they'd make." Golding is quite clear on this point: "Within the child are the seeds of evil that will eventually flower."

Golding questions civilisation itself; against man's innate savagery it seems contemptibly weak. In Golding's view, the innocence of the child is a crude fallacy, for man has by nature a terrible potentiality for evil. This potentiality cannot be eradicated or controlled by a human political system, no matter how respectable.

Golding insists that evil is inherent in man, a terrifying force that he must recognise and control. We are, in Golding's words, a species that "produces evil as a bee produces honey. "Just as the humble insect produces sweetness, we produce the wickedness and violence that sour our lives. Evil lies within man, whose nature is inherently depraved. Man's basic instinct is to kill, and the depth of his wickedness is revealed in his tendency to kill his own species.

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☐ The title is a translation of Beelzebub, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Ba'alzevuv, which in Judaism and Christianity denotes the principles of evil personified. He is one of the chief devils in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

☐ Golding equates the *Lord of the Flies* with the demonic (devilish) force present in humankind - a force so hideous, that fly-covered excrement would best represent it. Golding presents evil, not as an abstraction, but as something concrete, namely, a pig's head swarming with flies.

☐ In order to account for Simon's insight into the nature of evil, Golding makes him a visionary and a saint. Simon knows there is no beast: "maybe it's only us," he suggests. To clarify his suggestion, he asks timidly, "What's the dirtiest thing there is?" Jack answers in a word of "one crude expressive syllable." The word is obviously "shit", which in 1954 Golding was too discreet to use. The logic here is clear but depressing: if humans are the beasts, then humans are shit. Thus the two basic metaphors for evil are flies and excrement, so that the Lord of the Flies is the Lord of Dung. Excrement is everywhere on the island. Eating fruit causes diarrhoea, and the island is dotted with faeces.