

# Summer Reading Assignment for Pre-AP and Honors English I

## *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

**Instructions:** Read the following literary background of *Lord of the Flies* (1954). The written assignments for this summer-reading novel are located on the pages following this background information. Please read the instructions carefully. This assignment is due the first day of class in August.

### THE LITERARY BACKGROUND OF *LORD OF THE FLIES*

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) parodies an earlier story by Ballantyne called *The Coral Island* (1857). Yet Golding's parody does not make fun of the earlier work; rather, according to Golding, *Lord of the Flies* "is subtly rooted in admiration" (18) for his favorite childhood story. However, Golding sees Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* as an idealized account of human behavior in the wild. In *The Coral Island* three young Victorian boys find themselves marooned on an unidentified Pacific island—"Ralph Rover, the fifteen-year-old narrator"; Jack Martin "a tall strapping broad shouldered youth of eighteen, with a handsome, good-humored, firm face"; and Peterkin Gay, "little quick, funny, decidedly mischievous, and about fourteen years old" (19). Well-versed in the manners of Victorian society, these three boys live life on this island "in uninterrupted harmony and happiness" (19).

The boys in *The Coral Island* never resort to the baseness of fleshly desire; they kill only for useful purposes such as "Peterkin's butchery of a sow to get leather for 'future shoes'" (20). In the end, the boys are saved by a teacher who proclaims, "[T]hrough the great goodness of God you are free!" (20). Rewarded for their ability to remain civilized in the wild, the boys find redemption both in this world and in heaven.

Golding's *Lord of the Flies* presents a much darker look at human nature. Using the structure of *The Coral Island* and even borrowing from its character names (Peterkin is split into Piggy and Simon), Golding responds cynically to Ballantyne's vision of humanity. In 1954, after witnessing WWII and the horrors of the atomic bomb, Golding doubts man's innate goodness and comments, "... people are not like that; they would not behave like that if they were Godfearing Englishmen, and they went to an island like that" (20). Appropriately, Golding opens his book with a glimpse of the world which has turned his vision from man's higher spirit to man's baser nature—the boys' plane has crashed after evacuating

them from an atomic holocaust. Mentioned only now and then throughout the story, the adult world of destruction from which the boys have emerged returns in pieces to undercut the adult world of order and civilization on which Piggy insists. The tension between the two forces—the irrational and the rational--inspires the action in Golding's story of lost innocence, *Lord of the Flies*.

--Dick, Bernard F. William Golding. New York: Twayne Publishing, Inc., 1967.

### **Reading Guide--Chapter Questions**

**Annotate/Take notes:** In order to get the most out of your reading (and make your fall assignments much easier), make sure you're an active reader of these books. As you read, take notes in a one-subject notebook or on google docs over **character/character development, conflict, theme, rhetorical devices/word choice, setting, and form/structure**. Pose questions and do your best to answer them. Remember to jot down page numbers so it is easy to find the passages you want. These notes should be ample proof that you have carefully read the work. Do not just summarize the plot!

**Words you don't know:** Keep track of words you come across that are new to you. Of course, define them in the margins or extra blank space. Record page numbers to keep track of them in context. If you start now, this task will not be as daunting throughout the school year.

**Please answer the following questions using complete, well-constructed sentences in the same notebook (or google doc) in which you annotated/took notes.**

#### **Chapters 1-2**

1. Identify: Ralph, Piggy, Simon, Jack, Sam & Eric, Maurice, Roger, and "The littluns."
2. How did the boys happen to come to the island?
3. What do the boys have that is the symbol of authority in the society they form?
4. What does the reader learn about Jack when he slashed the green candle buds?
5. Why does Jack hesitate when he lifts his knife to kill the piglet, and what does he promise will happen the next time he meets a pig?
6. Who are the hunters, and what is their job?
7. What does a little 'un think he has seen in the forest?
8. How and why do the boys make fire?
9. Why the boys' plan for rescue fail?

#### **Chapters 3-4**

1. Although Ralph criticizes the boys for their lack of cooperation, does he bear some of the responsibility for the failures of the group to achieve its goals? Why or why not?
2. How has Jack's personality developed during his stay on the island?

3. Ralph says of Simon: "He's queer. He's funny." What kind of a boy is Simon?
4. After Maurice and Roger destroy the littluns' sand castles, Roger stalks the young boy named Henry. When he begins to throw stones, why does he just throw them near him instead of directly at him?
5. What causes the hunters, who had promised to keep the fire burning, to neglect it and allow it to go out?
6. Why does Jack paint his face?

### **Chapters 5-6**

1. How does the author show us that Ralph is finally beginning to face the realities of their existence?
2. Compare Ralph's treatment of the littluns with Jack's.
3. What is Simon saying when he thinks the "beast" may be inside the boys themselves?
4. What do Sam and Eric tell the boys they have seen? What is it actually?
5. Why do Ralph and Jack decide to go find the beast?

### **Chapters 7-8**

1. How does Ralph react when a boar comes charging down the path?
2. To what does Ralph's demonstration of his hunting prowess lead?
3. What did the boys see on the mountain top?
4. Why is the action of the story increasingly taking place in the near darkness or in the deep night when only the moon and stars give a little light?
5. How does Ralph's waning confidence in himself show in his words and actions?
6. Although he is not able to get the boys to vote Ralph out of office as chief, Jack manages to overthrow Ralph's authority anyway. How?
7. Jack suggests a way to keep the beast happy. What is it?
8. Describe Simon's strange encounter with the Lord of the Flies.
9. Who or what is the Lord of the Flies?

### **Chapters 9-11**

1. What does Simon find when he finally reaches the Beast?
2. What happens to Simon when he returns to the group?
3. Because of the storm with its high winds and high tides, what happens to the bodies of Simon and the parachutist?
4. What does Jack plan to steal from Ralph and Piggy?

5. What will Jack do if someone interferes with him?
6. What happens to the conch and to Piggy?
7. What are Jack's plans for Ralph?
8. What course of action does Ralph take?

### **Chapter 12**

1. What is Ralph's reaction when he encounters the pig's skull?
2. Driven by fear and hunger, Ralph manages to make contact with Samneric, who are standing guard at Castle Rock. Of what do they warn him?
3. In what ways does the tribe try to hunt down Ralph?
4. What or who saves Ralph in the end?