

Lord of the Flies: Key Facts

- **Genre:** Allegory; dystopian fiction
- **Language:** English
- **Date Of First Publication:** 1954
- **Narrator:** The story is told by an anonymous third-person narrator who conveys the events of the novel without commenting on the action or intruding into the story.
- **Point Of View:** The narrator speaks in the third person, primarily focusing on Ralph's point of view but following Jack and Simon in certain episodes. The narrator is omniscient and gives us access to the characters' inner thoughts.
- **Tone:** Dark; violent; pessimistic; and tragic
- **Tense:** Immediate past
- **Setting (Time):** Around the year 1950, during a fictional worldwide war
- **Setting (Place):** A deserted tropical island
- **Protagonist:** Ralph

Lord of the Flies: Conflict

- **Major Conflict:** Free from the rules that adult society formerly imposed on them, the boys marooned on the island struggle with the conflicting human instincts that exist within each of them—the instinct to work toward civilization and order and the instinct to descend into savagery, violence, and chaos.
- **Rising Action:** The boys assemble on the beach. In the election for leader, Ralph defeats Jack, who is furious when he loses. As the boys explore the island, tension grows between Jack, who is interested only in hunting, and Ralph, who believes most of the boys' efforts should go toward building shelters and maintaining a signal fire. When rumors surface that there is some sort of beast living on the island, the boys grow fearful, and the group begins to divide into two camps supporting Ralph and Jack, respectively. Ultimately, Jack forms a new tribe altogether, fully immersing himself in the savagery of the hunt.
- **Climax:** Simon encounters the Lord of the Flies in the forest glade and realizes that the beast is not a physical entity but rather something that exists within each boy on the island. When Simon tries to approach the other boys and convey this message to them, they fall on him and kill him savagely.
- **Falling Action:** Virtually all the boys on the island abandon Ralph and Piggy and descend further into savagery and chaos. When the other boys kill Piggy and destroy the conch shell, Ralph flees from Jack's tribe and encounters the naval officer on the beach.

Chapter One: Nameless Boys

An English schoolboy of about twelve years old explores a jungle. A second boy soon joins the first. The first boy is tall, handsome, and athletic. The second is fat and wears glasses. The boys discuss what happened and how they got to the jungle. They're fairly sure the plane they were in was shot down and crash landed on an island, and that all the adults on the plane were killed. They wonder if any of the other schoolboys on the flight survived.

The boys are nameless. Names are a product of society, which the boys have now left. The island is a paradise not just because it's beautiful, but also because it's a blank slate on which the supposedly innocent boys can build something new.

Ralph and Piggy

The fat boy asks the tall boy his name. The tall boy answers, Ralph. But instead of asking the fat boy's name, Ralph wanders off. The fat boy follows, but can barely keep up because of his asthma. When the fat boy starts eating some fruit, Ralph slips away and finds a beautiful beach.

Eventually the fat boy finds Ralph and proposes they call a meeting and make a list of everyone who survived. He admits that in school people called him Piggy. Ralph laughs. Piggy begs Ralph not to tell anyone.

Ralph ignores the fat boy because the boy is fat and weak. Piggy, the weak boy, tries to win the friendship of Ralph, the strong boy. Piggy's desperation only makes him seem more weak.

The Conch Shell

The boys keep exploring. Ralph finds a perfect swimming hole and says his father, who's in the Navy, will come rescue them. But Piggy is fairly certain that no one knows where they landed. Piggy says they have to do something. Just then, Ralph spots a huge conch shell. Piggy realizes they can use it as a trumpet. Piggy can't blow it himself, because of his asthma, but shows Ralph how to do it. Ralph blows, and a huge blast sounds.

Though weak, Piggy is smarter than Ralph. He comes up with the idea for the meeting and using the conch. By blowing the conch, Ralph and Piggy both become civilizing forces: they organize the boys to figure out what to do.

The Meeting

All the boys gather on the beach: they range in age from six to twelve. There's one set of twins, Sam and Eric. A group of the older boys are members of a choir, dressed in black. Their leader is Jack, a redhead who tries to take control of the meeting. One of the boys in the choir, Simon, faints. Jack soon tells Piggy to shut up, and calls him "Fatty." Ralph gleefully reveals that Piggy's name is "Piggy." Everyone laughs, humiliating Piggy.

The meeting is Piggy's effort to build a "civilization," but already Jack seeks to take over by mocking Piggy. Ralph plays along, wanting to seem strong. Fainting spells like Simon's were once considered signs of a spiritual connection to higher powers.

Voting

The boys decide to vote for a leader. Everyone in the choir votes for Jack, but all the other boys vote for Ralph because he blew the conch. To keep Jack happy, Ralph says that the choir will be hunters and Jack will lead them.

Ralph decides the boys must explore their island. He and Jack will both go, of course. Ralph ignores Piggy whining pleas to be included, and picks Simon to be the third explorer. Ralph, Jack, and Simon have a great time exploring, and stop to push a huge boulder off a cliff, which seems to them like a great accomplishment.

As the conch-blower, Ralph symbolizes civilization. But Ralph realizes he must keep Jack happy: civilization makes a deal with savagery. The three boys who symbolize civilization, savagery, and spirituality all go to explore the island together. As of now, all three are united.

Hunting

The boys climb to the highest peak on the island, which they call the mountain, from where they can see that they're on an uninhabited island. They also see the "scar" where the crashing plane tore through the jungle. Ralph says of the island, "This belongs to us."

Soon the boys head back down the mountain to the beach. On the way, they spot a wild pig caught in vines. Jack pulls out his pocket knife, but pauses before striking, and the pig escapes. Jack vows not to hesitate next time.

Ralph claims the island for civilization. But in doing so he also claims the scar, the symbol of the savagery that exists in human nature. Jack's still too "civilized" to kill the pig. But the sight of the pig sparks his savage desire to dominate anything that lives.