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## Objectives

- Students will be able to identify symbolism in a work of fiction.
- Students will be able to understand the relationship between plot, setting, and character in a work of fiction.
- Students will be able to identify examples of internal and external conflict in a work of fiction.
- Students will be able to correctly use vocabulary words.

## Symbolism

It should be understood from the beginning that *Lord of the Flies* is constructed almost entirely of symbols. A **symbol** is something that is not only itself, but represents some idea far greater than itself. Here are some of the symbols in this section:

“The choir, who perched like black birds on the criss-cross trunks and examined Ralph with interest.” They symbolize carrion crows or ravens, which suggest death. The fact that they are examining Ralph suggests they may threaten him eventually.

Wearily obedient, the choir huddled into line and stood there swaying the sun. None the less, some began to protest faintly.

“But, Merridew. Please, Merridew. . . can’t we?”

Then one of the boys flopped on his face in the sand and the line broke up. They heaved the fallen boy to the platform and let him lie. Merridew, his eyes staring, made the best of a bad job. “All right then. Sit down. Let him alone.”

“But Merridew.”

“He’s always throwing a faint,” said Merridew.

Not only does this scene reveal that Jack seems to be a heartless person, but it also shows that he is too egotistical to admit when he has made a mistake. The fact that the choir simply “heaved” one of their own around symbolizes those boys’ cruel nature and their disdain for any physical weakness. Deeper, it foreshadows what will happen to the boy who fainted.

Ralph looked at him, eager to offer something. “The choir belongs to you, of course.”



“They could be the army—”

“Or hunters—”

“They could be...”

The suffusion drained away from Jack’s face. Ralph waved again for silence.

“Jack’s in charge of the choir. They can be—what do you want them to be?”

“Hunters.”

This scene symbolizes the major conflicts for the story: Ralph’s and Jack’s struggle to be the boys’ chief, and the conflict between the nature of Ralph, who supports constructive cooperation, and Jack’s nature of a self-serving desire for power through threat of violence.

### *Setting, Characters & Plot*

The **setting** for this section is the beach of a deserted tropical island. The **characters** Ralph, Jack, and Piggy are involved in a dispute over who should lead the boys. The **plot** turns when Ralph is chosen as chief and, in an attempt to smooth rising tempers with Jack, he lets Jack have control over the choir. This has created a fissure, or split, in the boys; now there are two “tribes.”

### *Internal & External Conflict*

**External conflict** occurs when a character is fighting against some sort of external, or outside, force. The force can be caused by another character, natural forces, a group, or even society. External conflict can consist of a verbal confrontation between two characters. Here is an example from this section:

“You’re talking too much,” said Jack Merridew. “Shut up, Fatty.”

Laughter arose.

“He’s not Fatty,” cried Ralph, “his real name’s Piggy!”

“Piggy!”

“Piggy!”

“Oh, Piggy!”

Jack’s bullying Piggy is obviously external conflict. However, when Ralph tries to step in to help him, saying that “his real name is Piggy,” this inadvertently leads to widescale taunting, which is a different kind of external conflict. (Worse, Ralph has betrayed Piggy’s trust by telling the boys his hated nickname. In Ralph’s defense, however, he does not know Piggy’s real name.)

**Internal conflict** is when a character struggles within over a decision. At this point of the story, most of the conflict remains internal. Here is an example from this section:

Ralph counted.

“I’m chief then.”

The circle of boys broke into applause. Even the choir applauded; and the freckles on Jack’s face disappeared under a blush of mortification. He started up, then changed his mind and sat down again while the air rang.

Jack is angry and hurt that he was not chosen. However, he is not sure how to react. That indecision is an example of internal conflict.

## *Vocabulary*

Being able to understand the vocabulary in *Lord of the Flies* will help you better understand and appreciate the story. The following is a list of words from this section that you can use to help expand your vocabulary.

**Clouted** – verb – hit very hard

The bully *clouted* him painfully on the head.

**Dispersal** – noun – The act of spreading of objects apart from each other

An even *dispersal* of grass seeds on the ground helps ensure an attractive, healthy lawn.

**Pallor** – noun – Extreme or unnatural paleness, especially in the face

After spending six weeks in a cave, Earl’s face had an unhealthy *pallor*.

**Suffusion** – noun – the process of spreading over or filling something

There was a *suffusion* of color in the evening sky from the glowing sunset.

**Mortification** – noun – the state of being deeply embarrassed or humiliated

When I accidentally insulted the Rabbi’s wife, the *mortification* I felt was overwhelming.

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## Growth & Assessment

1. What does “the choir perched like black birds on the criss-cross trunks” **symbolize**?
  - a. Happiness
  - b. Loneliness
  - c. Death
  - d. Hunger
2. What is the **setting** for this section?
  - a. In the jungle
  - b. On a mountain
  - c. A tropic island
  - d. In the forest
3. What is the **plot** in this section?
  - a. The boys are taunting Piggy
  - b. Simon faints
  - c. Ralph swims in the bathing pool
  - d. The boys decide who will be chief
4. What **internal conflict** does Jack experience in this section?
5. What is “pallor”?