

Lord of the Flies, Chapter 12, Section 2

Objectives:

- Identify major plot points in *Lord of the Flies*.
- Identify internal and external conflicts in *Lord of the Flies*.
- Analyze the relationship between internal and external conflict in *Lord of the Flies*.
- Analyze how the structure, pacing, and point of view of *Lord of the Flies* create effects such as tension and suspense.
- Analyze the development of theme in *Lord of the Flies*.

Plot and Theme

In the final chapter of *Lord of the Flies*, Jack's hunters resolve to hunt down and kill Ralph, who they perceive as the enemy. Ralph frantically runs and hides, and the other boys set fire to the island to try to draw Ralph out. The fire finally attracts the attention of a passing ship. Just as Ralph is about to be killed, the boys are rescued.

Lord of the Flies discusses two aspects of human nature: civility and savagery. At the end of Chapter 8, the reader, like Simon, learns that the beast on the island is the savage part of human nature. The final chapters of this novel focus on the struggle between this savage nature and civility. Through the plot events in this part of the book, the reader sees this struggle in a variety of ways, including:

- through the characters' conflicting attitudes about Simon's death
- through Piggy's refusal to give in to savagery and his subsequent death
- through Sam and Eric's capture, and their attempt to help Ralph
- through Jack's hunt for Ralph, and the resulting rescue

These conflicting events in the final chapters of *Lord of the Flies* help emphasize the conflict between savagery and civility in the book, which is one of Golding's primary themes. They also help to highlight Golding's message, which is that evil and savagery exist in all humans, and that these characteristics are liable to emerge when unchecked.

Development of Suspense

The final chapter of *Lord of the Flies* is one of the tensest in the novel. Ralph is on the run for his life, and he struggles to decide the best way to survive Jack's onslaught. Although the plot itself

is suspenseful, the reader must also consider the way that Golding structures the final chapter of the novel to make it as exciting as possible.

To do this, Golding employs several literary devices. First, he develops the conflict in a full and rich manner to increase the tension. This chapter contains both internal and external conflicts, and these conflicts are linked: Jack and the other boys are hunting Ralph (external conflict), and as a result, Ralph is forced to figure out the best way to survive (internal conflict). If Ralph does not choose the best way to resolve his internal conflict, the result will be his death. The stakes of these conflicts add tension to this final chapter.

Another way that Golding increases the tension in this final chapter is through the pacing and structure of Ralph's internal conflict. Golding develops this conflict by allowing the reader to see Ralph's thoughts. However, rather than develop the internal conflict without interruption, Golding punctuates Ralph's thoughts with action:

What was to be done, then? The tree? Burst the line like a boar? Either way the choice was terrible.

A single cry quickened his heart-beat and, leaping up, he dashed away toward the ocean side and the thick jungle till he was hung up among creepers; he stayed there for a moment with his calves quivering. If only one could have quiet, a long pause, a time to think!

In this passage, the narrator reveals Ralph's thoughts and then jumps back to the action, allowing the reader to experience the moment as Ralph does. This helps to add suspense to this section of the book.

Finally, Golding experiments with the point of view. Most of the novel is told using third-person omniscient point of view. Occasionally in the final chapter, though, Golding uses first- or second-person point of view. Both of these points of view tune the reader in to Ralph's thoughts on a more intimate level and allow the reader to experience Ralph's fear more acutely. This helps to make the final chapter more suspenseful.

Can you think of any other ways that Golding increases suspense at the end of the book?

Vocabulary

Understanding vocabulary words can help you to gain more meaning from the work. Following are some vocabulary words from this chapter of the reading.

Word	Definition	Use in Context
agonizing (adj.)	causing great physical or mental pain	"He visualized its probable progress with <u>agonizing</u> clearness—that one would start slowly, drop from ledge to ledge, trundle across the neck like an outsize

		steamroller.”
balked (verb)	stopped by an obstacle	“Any savage <u>balked</u> in the forest would utter the double shout and hold up the line till he was free again.”
obscurity (noun)	a thing that is unclear or difficult to understand	“The savage peered into the <u>obscurity</u> beneath the thicket.”
menace (noun)	a person or thing likely to cause harm	“Below him someone’s legs were getting tired and the desperate ululation advanced like a jagged fringe of <u>menace</u> and was almost overhead.”
distended (adj.)	bloated	“Other boys were appearing now, tiny tots some of them, brown, with the <u>distended</u> bellies of small savages.”

Try using these words in your own sentences to improve your understanding and knowledge of them.

Summary

The end of *Lord of the Flies* is both suspenseful and action-packed. Ralph is on the run for his life, and he must determine the best way to survive as Jack and the other boys hunt him down. Through the conflicts, point of view, pacing, and structure of this final chapter, Golding creates tension that compels the reader to continue to read to the end of the book. The events in the final chapter also serve to drive home Golding’s message about human nature: Evil and savagery exist in all humans, and these characteristics are liable to emerge when unchecked.

Concept Reinforcement

1. What is one way that Golding shows the struggle between civility and savagery in the final chapters of *Lord of the Flies*?
2. What is one way that Golding increases tension at the end of the book?
3. What is Golding’s message about human nature?