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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

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

“The complex undergrowth that was already engulfing the scar.”

The scar symbolizes the boys’ emotional toughening and increasing loss of mercy. At this point in the story, there are three main divisions that exist between the boys. There is Ralph’s small group that represents order and civilization, there is Jack’s larger group which represents a descent into savagery, and there are the Littluns who represent the neutral, helpless majority. “The complex undergrowth” symbolizes the complex alliances between the groups and individuals. “Already engulfing the scar” means that all the boys are becoming emotionally harder, as well as becoming accustomed to life on the island.

Balanced on a high peak of need, agonized by indecision, Ralph cried out: “Oh God, oh God!”

Simon, struggling with the bushes, caught his breath.

The character of Simon is being developed into a Christ figure. The appearance of Simon immediately after Ralph cries out in profound distress, “Oh God, oh God!” further symbolizes this role.

The ship vanishing over the horizon symbolizes the disappearance of the boys’ ability to remain civilized and avoid descending into savagery.

“Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood.”

Jack allowed his boys to abandon their lookout post to help him with a pig hunt. This symbolizes Jack’s decision to forego hope that they will be rescued and to accept the savage way of life. It also demonstrates Jack’s selfish and total absorption with achieving his personal ambition. The chant that the hunters recite represents his primitive, violent, and merciless mentality.

Piggy shouting that he has only one eye is important. Piggy is the intellectual in the group. His impaired ability to see symbolizes the boys' loss of ability to reason, thus leaving them only primitive instinct with which to function. However, there is also a reference in the line:

“The one-eyed man is king in a kingdom of blind men.”

While the other boys are behaving primarily in a reactionary way to circumstances around them, Piggy is the only one who resists instinct and holds on to reason.

By the time the pile was built, they were on different sides of a high barrier.

The high barrier symbolizes Jack and Ralph's opposition, which will remain in place for the remainder of the story.

### *Setting, Characters & Plot*

The **setting** is the place where the story takes place. In this section the setting is the mountain top. The **characters** are the people in the story. In this case, Ralph, Jack, Simon, Piggy, and the hunters are the characters involved. The **plot** is the storyline. Ralph and the group of boys rush up the hill because a ship's smoke has been spotted in the distance, but there is no signal smoke from the mountain. They arrive at hilltop to stoke the signal fire, but the fire has been allowed to go out. The ship in the distance vanishes. Jack and the hunters arrive with the first killed pig. There is a fierce confrontation between the furious Ralph and an indignant Jack. Jack hits Piggy and his glasses are broken.

### *Internal & External Conflict*

**External conflict** occurs when a character is struggling against some sort of external, or outside, force. The conflict can be caused by another character or by natural forces, such as a sea captain fighting to keep his ship afloat during a hurricane. External conflict can also consist of a verbal confrontation between two characters. Here are some examples from this section.

“You could have had everyone when the shelters were finished. But you had to hunt—”

“We needed meat.” Jack stood up as he said this, the bloodied knife in his hand. The two boys faced each other. There was the brilliant world of hunting, tactics, fierce exhilaration, skill; and there was the world of longing and baffled commonsense.

Not only is the verbal confrontation between Ralph and Jack an external conflict, but the fact that Jack brandishes his knife makes it a very threatening one.

Jack and Piggy also experience external conflict.

Piggy began again. “You didn't ought to have let that fire out. You said you'd keep the smoke going—”

This from Piggy, and the wails of agreement from some of the hunters, drove Jack to violence. The bolting look came into his blue eyes. He took a step, and able at last to hit someone, stuck his fist into Piggy's stomach. Piggy sat down with a grunt. Jack stood over him. His voice was vicious with humiliation.

"You would, would you? Fatty!"

Ralph made a step forward and Jack smacked Piggy's head. Piggy's glasses flew off and tinkled on the rocks.

Piggy cried out in terror: "My specs!"

**Internal conflict** is when a character struggles within over a decision. Here is an example of internal conflict from the section:

Was it better to fetch Piggy's glasses, or would the ship have gone? Or if they climbed on, supposing the fire was all out, and they had to watch Piggy crawling nearer and the ship sinking under the horizon? Balanced on a high peak of need, agonized by indecision, Ralph cried out: "Oh God, oh God!"

Ralph's indecision about how best to proceed in a crucial moment is a painful 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.

**Ecstatic** – adjective – In a state of ecstasy; joyful or enraptured

When our team won the championship, I was *ecstatic*!

**Irrelevance** – noun – Of no importance to a matter being considered

The *irrelevance* of what color belt I wear to the movies was apparent.

**Gale** – noun – A rain storm with very strong winds

The sailors stayed in port that day because of the *gale* warnings in the news.

**Hysteria** – noun – An uncontrollable outburst of emotion such as fear, or grief

Radio news of an attack by aliens caused *hysteria* in New Jersey in 1938.

**Obscure** – adjective – Not clearly seen or easily distinguished; faint

His motives for attacking a department store mannequin seemed *obscure*.

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## Growth & Assessment

1. What **symbolizes** the boys' inability to remain civilized and avoid descending into savagery?
  - a. The sand castles
  - b. The mask
  - c. The ship
  - d. The mirages
2. What is the **setting** for this section?
  - a. The mountain top
  - b. The shelters
  - c. The beach
  - d. The platform
3. Which **character** breaks Piggy's specs?
  - a. Roger
  - b. Jack
  - c. Simon
  - d. Ralph
4. Describe the **internal conflict** Ralph experiences in this section.
5. What is "hysteria"?