

Lord of the Flies: Socratic Seminar

William Golding (b. 1911) grew up in the years prior to WWI. This war changed people's attitudes about mankind. They no longer believed that people were essentially good-hearted, but rather evil. The atrocities of war made it difficult to believe in human innocent. This shift in thinking, together with Golding's own opinions after serving in WWII, is reflected in *Lord of the Flies*.

A "Socratic Seminar" involves analyzing questions and discussing them in detail. In order to participate fully in our class discussion you *must* be able to answer some or all of the following questions and provide some insight and analysis. We definitely won't cover all of the questions, however, we will try to get through as many as possible. *Opening questions* are those that are *italicized*, and they deal with questions whose answers can be found directly in the text. **Core questions** are those that are **bolded**, and they are questions whose answers require in-depth analysis and thought about what occurs in the text. Closing questions are those that are underlined, and are those questions that apply to the world around us, and to ourselves.

If you miss this assignment, you must write a three paragraph, analytical response to either a CORE or CLOSING question of your choosing below.

Rules:

1. You **MUST** speak 3 times for full credit. Each turn you speak must involve original thought. You are CUT OFF at 5 times.
2. You are arranged in two circles. Pick a partner to "buddy up" with. When you are in the inner circle, you may talk. When you are in the outer circle, you are taking notes on what is said, and you are marking on a small half-sheet of paper how many times your partner speaks, and briefly what they say.
3. Use the text, or your knowledge about the text, whenever possible.
4. Active listening will at best earn you a 70%.
5. You must be taking notes and not looking at other homework/other classwork or, most especially, your phone.
6. Have fun!

- *At the beginning of the novel, why does the conch shell take and retain such a powerful symbolic value? Look back/think back to its description in chapter 1. Also consider the sound it makes.*
- *How is the fire significant?*
- *What events foreshadow Piggy's fate?*
- *Describe what is happening to the boys' appearance as the novel progresses and how is that symbolic.*
- *What evidence do we have that Ralph was losing his mind toward the end?*
- **How would the book have been different if Simon had lived?**
- **How would the book have been different if Jack never caught a pig?**
- **Describe the significance of the title.**
- **Why do the boys have to paint their faces to do evil deeds?**
- **When there were only four of them, Ralph still blew the conch to start the final assembly. Why did he do this?**
- **What weapons did Ralph and Jack use in their fight at the end and how is the choice of weapon symbolic?**
- **Why did Golding choose a choir as Jack's group?**
- **Describe the ironic nature of the rescue.**
- **If you had to state this theme in a sentence of at least ten words, how would you do so?**
- **How is fear used in the novel?**
- **Why did Golding write the book with the main characters as children?**
- **Explore the meaning of Golding's frequent repetition of the colors red/pink or blue/white in Lord of the Flies. What does he accomplish through such emphasis by repetition?**
- **Of all the characters, it is Piggy who most often has useful ideas and sees the correct way for the boys to organize themselves. Yet the other boys rarely listen to him and frequently abuse him. Why do you think this is the case? In what ways does Golding use Piggy to advance the novel's themes?**
- **What, if anything, might the dead parachutist symbolize? Does he symbolize something other than what the beast and the Lord of the Flies symbolize?**
- **The sow's head and the conch shell each wield a certain kind of power over the boys. In what ways do these objects' powers differ? In what way is Lord of the Flies a novel about power? About the power of symbols? About the power of a person to use symbols to control a group?**
- **Why do you think Golding chose to set *Lord of the Flies* on an island, and how does he use the island in the novel?**

- **Who is to blame for what happened on the island? Why?**
- **Why does Ralph cry at the end of the novel? Why had he never cried before?**
- Is Lord of the Flies a good book for 9th graders to read? Why?
- What makes Jack a powerful leader? How do you think Golding wants you to respond to Jack?
- What role do the littluns play in the novel? In one respect, they serve as gauges of the older boys' moral positions, for we see whether an older boy is kind or cruel based on how he treats the littluns. But are the littluns important in and of themselves? What might they represent in our world? Why?
- Who is the beast in American society?
- How would you have acted if you had been on the island?
- Are people innately savage, civil, both, or neither?
- "Fear is the enemy for civilization; fear prevents construction and progress." Do you agree? Discuss the fragility of civilization against the destructive powers of fear.