**Lord of the Flies**

**by William Golding**

**INTRODUCTION**

*Lord of the Flies* is set in the future and centers on a group of English school boys in the process of evacuation to a safe area of the world following the outbreak of nuclear war in Europe. This migration, or sending-away, echoes much of the history of children and youth sent from England to work in Canada on the farms of the prairies, and in the small towns of Ontario. Children were often sent away from big cities in times of war, so the context is fairly plausible.

Somewhere over the ocean, probably the Indian or Pacific Ocean because of the tropical setting, the plane is attacked. The boys land safely on an island but there are no adult survivors. The boys range in age from twelve to “littluns”, who are probably six or seven years old.

**BACKGROUND**

After reading a bedtime boys adventure story (believed to be *Coral Island*) to his small children, Golding wondered out loud to his wife whether it would be a good idea to write such a story but to let the characters "behave as they really would." It is also believed that the single event in Golding's life that most affected his writing of *Lord of the Flies*, was probably his service in World War II.

Golding sets up the following conflicts in the novel:

1. The struggle between parliamentary democracy and totalitarian dictatorship.
2. The struggle between the ideals of modern society and the impulses of primitive man.
3. The struggle in all of us between good and evil.
4. The struggle between intellectual reason and savagery.

Symbolism

The entire story is an **allegory**, a narrative in which characters or objects are used to symbolize abstract qualities.

Symbolism is the process whereby we arbitrarily make certain things stand for other things. It is generally accepted that the island on which the boys are on is a microcosm (small world) of society. It is no doubt that Golding selected his characters for universality that could be expanded far beyond the tiny island. Golding employs name symbolism, and symbolic acts, objects, places and people. Consider the following symbols:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SYMBOL** | **MEANING** | **EVIDENCE** |
| The conch shellLOTF - Conch2.jpg |  |  |
| Piggy’s specsLOTF - glasses.jpg |  |  |
| The islandLOTF - Island.jpg |  |  |
| The scard:\Documents and Settings\ilearn\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\FXHR7KEI\MP900448714[1].jpg |  |  |
| The signal fireLOTF - Signal Fire.jpg |  |  |
| The beastd:\Documents and Settings\ilearn\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\S0SUUJ45\MC900435919[1].wmf |  |  |
| The Lord of the Flies (Pig’s head)LOTF - Pig's Head 2.jpg |  |  |
|  The masks (painted faces)LOTF - Savagry.jpg |  |  |
| Ralph (name means: council”) |  |  |
| Jack (name means: “one who supplants”) |  |  |
| Piggy (name refers to pigs on island) |  |  |
| Simon (name means “listener”) |  |  |
| Roger (name means “spear”) |  |  |