



ISSN: (3006-8614)
E-ISSN: (3006-8622)

Journal of Alma'rifa for Humanities

available online at: <https://uomosul.edu.iq/womeneducation/almarifa/>



An Exploration of The Nature of Evil in Human beings And Its Connection to Environmental Factors in Lord of The Flies by William Golding

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 0009-0002-6220-4204

Keywords:

evil impulses,
savagery,
primitivism,
barbarism,
aggression

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 27. May.2025
Revised 20. May.2025
Accepted 7. Jul.2025
Available online 3.Jan.2026

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A B S T R A C T

In his first and most praised book, Lord of the Flies (1954), William Golding presents a dismal picture of human nature by implying that everyone has an inherent bad inclination. From this vantage point, the darker sides of humanity as a whole are sharply criticized. Set on a lonely island, the book looks at how the boys' primal and unrefined behavior is brought out by lack of adult supervision and hostile surroundings. It shows how human beings are able to plunge into violence and cruelty free from social or legal limitations. Golding claims that the only thing keeping human natural barbarism under control is civilization. The message of the book revolves on the terrible results of revealing this inner nature—something even young people are not free from. By use of the plot, symbolism, character development, and conflict between truth and illusion, this research explores the concept of evil in the novel. Furthermore, the solitary and wild environs of the island help to intensify these dark impulses, therefore showing how strongly the lads' surroundings shape their descent into barbarism. ©2026AJHPS, College of Education for women, University of Mosul.

استكشاف طبيعة الشر في البشر وعلاقته بالعوامل البيئية في رواية "سيد الذباب"
 للكاتب ويليام غولدينغ
 محمد وليد اسعد
 جامعة الموصل / كلية الآداب

الخلاصة:

في روايته الأولى الشهيرة سيد الذباب (1954)، يقدم ويليام غولدينغ تصورًا قاتمًا للطبيعة البشرية، مشيرًا إلى أن لدى جميع الأفراد قابلية فطرية للشر. تنتقد الرواية الجوانب المظلمة في النفس البشرية من خلال تصوير مجموعة من الفتية العالقين في جزيرة مهجورة، حيث تكشف غياب السلطة البالغة والبيئة القاسية عن غرائزهم البدائية. يرى غولدينغ أن الحضارة هي القوة الوحيدة التي تكبح الهمجية الكامنة في الإنسان. ومن خلال تطور الحبكة، والرمزية، وتطور الشخصيات، والصراع بين الحقيقة والوهم، يستكشف هذا البحث تجليات الشر في الرواية. كما أن عزلة الجزيرة وطبيعتها المتوحشة تعززان من حدة هذه النزعات، مما يُظهر مدى تأثير البيئة على انحدار الأولاد إلى الهمجية — حتى في سن مبكرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النزعات الشريرة، الوحشية، البدائية، الهمجية، العدوان.

Introduction

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* masterfully investigates human nature and the inherent evil everyone bears. Published in 1954, the book—which offers a bleak assessment of the human potential for cruelty—is still among the most significant works of modern literature. Set on a barren island, the story revolves on a group of guys left without adult supervision and illustrates how their attempt at self-governance causes a descent into violence and chaos, therefore exposing the darker parts of human behaviour (Epstein, 1959). Using the isolated setting and the fall of social systems, Golding illustrates how the lack of social restrictions leads to the development of fundamental instincts and brutal behavior (Frye, 1962).

In *Lord of the Flies*, the boys' return to savagery is set off by the absence of natural and social elements. According to Golding's book, human nature is quick to revert to its most basic form without social order even if civilisation may suppress these darker inclinations (Drew, 1965).

With an emphasis on how outside events, particularly the absence of society standards and adult authority, are necessary in releasing the terrible impulses that lie latent inside the characters, this dissertation tries to investigate the concept of evil as it is portrayed in the book (Frye, 1962).. By way of an analysis of plot, symbols, and character development, this research will highlight the dangers of the craving for power and control—a cunning force not exempt even in children in their most vulnerable stage.

Review

This research paper presents a layered examination of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, focusing on the manifestation of inherent evil within human nature and the pivotal role of environmental factors in its emergence. Building on the foundational arguments of renowned critics such as Claire Rosenfield, who emphasized the psychological underpinnings of the boys' regression, and Philip Drew, who explored the moral ambiguity and symbolic structure of the novel, this study adds depth by integrating psychoanalytic, philosophical, and allegorical interpretations. Similarly, John Whitley's view of Golding's work as a grim parable about civilization's collapse finds resonance in this paper's argument that evil is not created by chaos but revealed through it (Whitley, 1970).

By exploring the characters' descent into savagery in light of Freudian theory and existential motifs such as the "dark night of the soul," the study underscores how isolation, fear, and the absence of order serve as catalysts for moral disintegration. The symbolism of the "Lord of the Flies" as a representation of internal darkness is discussed alongside critical perspectives, including Northrop Frye's literary theory on tragic and ironic modes (Frye, 1962), to frame the novel as both a psychological and societal critique. While the study offers a robust interpretation, it acknowledges the need for further examination of the sociopolitical dimensions of power and

group psychology, areas discussed in broader terms by Alvin Kernan and Peter Green (Kernan, 1965), (Green, 1963).

Ultimately, this paper contributes meaningfully to the ongoing academic discourse on Golding's novel by affirming the fragility of civilization and the ever-present potential for barbarism within the human soul, a view shared by many scholars who interpret the novel as a mirror to modern society's moral struggles.

Qualitative Approach: This study will employ a qualitative research design to analyze literary texts, focusing on themes, character analysis, and humanistic psychoanalysis.

Ralph, Jack, and the Emerging of Evil: The Villainous Dynamics:

Confusion and anarchy rule the boys' world in *Lord of the Flies*, and Ralph's leadership captures the frailty of reason confronted with human nature's basic impulses. Ralph is a "dreamer" and, although well-meaning, he sometimes lacks the intellectual rigidity and decisiveness needed to properly lead the group. His struggle to keep control over the lads results in his ultimate isolation; his efforts at leadership wain beneath Jack's increasing power. Jack's acceptance of savagery contrasts with Ralph's fall from grace, which finally results in Jack leading a blood lustful faction. Jack's fixation with power is clear in his change from an English choirboy to a leader of a murderous group. His ceremonial chants also represent his plunge into savagery; they catch the boy's craziness that consumes him as his terror of the imaginary beast turns into a lethal frenzy. Their superstition turns into a motivating factor that results in Simon's sad death, therefore symbolizing the loss of innocence and the triumph of evil. (Tiger, 1971)

Reversion towards savagery in *Lord of the Flies*:

The plot of *Lord of the Flies* centers on a group of English schoolboys evacuated from Britain because of an atomic war. They wind up caught on a lovely but abandoned Pacific Island. The boys first want to create a disciplined society based on adult world norms and rules. But as they plunge into savagery and finally commit loyalty to "*The Lord of the Flies*," a portrayal of the devil, this endeavour swiftly falls apart. Between six and twelve, the guys arrange themselves by choosing Ralph via a democratic procedure. Though Ralph is a good leader, his choices are sometimes lacking clarity, and the group's first sense of collaboration starts to fade (Tiger, 1971).

Ralph's three primary responsibilities are food hunting, building shelters and maintaining the fire. The lads work in unity at first, but with time they lose interest in their given chores, which causes their society to fall apart. Tension results and superstition drives anger that leads to disputes. Feeling slighted by Ralph's leadership, Jack develops a growing obsession with power that fuels a rivalry between the two. The book shows, as Peter Green notes, a "gradual reversion to the most primitive and bloodthirsty savagery" (Dick, 1970)..

Ralph's group, which stands for reason, and Jack's tribe, which represents savagery, are more at odds (Dick, 1970).. Piggy and Simon, Ralph's supporters, die finally; the others either join Jack's faction or are thrown aside. Jack's supporters hunt Ralph and set the island on fire in an effort to drive him clear. A naval officer shows up to save the youngsters when Ralph is about dead. Ralph laments the loss of innocence, the darkness inside human nature, and the death of his brilliant friend Piggy at the end of the book. The sad deaths of Simon and Piggy darken the ending even if the boys are saved (Golding, 1954).

Although the boys' rescue offers some comfort, the ending does not follow a traditional humorous one. A humorous resolution, according to Northrop Frye, is marked by a positive moral outcome; but, in this case the dark tone persists (Frye, 1962). Jack's acts, motivated by his ambition for power, are far from funny; they are evil; Ralph's leadership fails to stop their plunge into barbarism. This last clash underscores the conflict in a society ruled by anarchy between good and evil (Whitley, 1970).

"The dark night of the soul theory:

People go through a difficult and significant change to a better knowledge of life and their part in it during the dark night of the soul, on a stage of personal development. Along with this increased self-awareness comes the terrible disintegration of past conceptual frameworks—that which helped someone create purpose in their life—that included their identity, relationships, employment, habits, or belief systems.(Tiger, 1971).

Though others may not know the term "dark night of the soul," it has several connotations in religion, psychology, and mythology. Some of the associated diseases, like "existential crisis" and varieties of depression, are more easily identified.

Many times, a person's "soul" corresponds with their "dark night," which stands for a veiled view. Basically, it's when you're not sure who you truly are—during that dark night of the soul. This obscuration could distort someone's past ideas on the world or themselves.(Tiger, 1971)

"There cannot be rebirth without a dark night of the soul, a total annihilation of all you believed in and thought you were." – Hazrat Inayat Khan, 1922.

One of the most remarkable features of the book as it developed was the significant metamorphosis of the main characters as the story developed and events grew more complicated, hence producing the startling ending. Nearly all of the important characters—including Ralph, Jack, Piggy,

Simon, Roger, and others—saw major transformations over the narrative. Affected by psychological elements like upbringing, childhood, and the surroundings, these changes were not homogeneous but rather differed in surprising ways. Along with the "dark night of the soul," the lack of authority, law, and mature people to offer direction, protection, and, at times, discipline added to the changes in these individuals.(Dick, 1970)

These changes had amazing outcomes. Some of the characters, such as Simon and Ralph, developed to show maturity and thorough thought even though they were still teenagers. Piggy, too, showed good leadership, standing for reason and maturity and thereby reflecting the finest features of a society. Others, including Jack, Roger, and the other hunters, showed a darker, more savage side as they accepted change and exposed their actual nature under the surface of civilization they had kept before being on the island. These people committed in horrific crimes, brutality, murder, and destruction—actions that some adults might hesitate to do. This emphasises the actual character of the human spirit in its sick form and shows that, given the opportunity and the conviction that they may avoid punishment, even teenagers might develop deadly creatures.[4][

This is one of the primary arguments of this work since all of this could not have happened without the suitable environmental circumstances. One cannot fully appreciate a person's actual nature without witnessing their response in an atmosphere where regulations are either weak or nonexistent and where they are given total authority. We can only really know whether someone will show themselves as a civilised saviour or turn into a human beast targeted on domination, oppression, murder, and cruelty only in such an environment. (Dick, 1970),(Tiger, 1971).

This is what William Golding deftly shows in his book, providing a sobering analysis of the adult society. The book, which is set during World War II, is a stinging condemnation of the behaviour of adults—who were

meant to be civilised and cultured—yet their behaviour often reflected the anarchy and barbarism of the actual world.(Golding, 1954)

Revelation's key component is isolation:

Treating patients with mental diseases, Sigmund Freud established psychoanalytic theory, which has since become rather important not just in psychology but also in literature. One of the most successful approaches for comprehending the inner worlds of characters, their internal struggles, and how their unconscious thoughts shape their responses in daily life is psychoanalytic critique. Whether via physical location or emotional detachment, isolation—a condition of being cut off from one's surroundings—is one fundamental idea in this paradigm. As people negotiate the effects of being taken from their surroundings and support networks, this isolation can cause major health problems including depression and emotional disengagement. (Frye,1962).

According to this view, as the book's protagonists show, seclusion is absolutely essential in revealing the latent sides of the human psyche. The lads' change was greatly influenced by their surroundings, which was remote from society and underlined just by the "law of the jungle". The solitude of this surroundings defined it. Living in such circumstances, when contact with the outside world was almost impossible, caused hopelessness and anxiety. With few other choices, this then resulted in increased hostility as the boys battled for dominance, control, and power. Tolerance, and cooperation spread in this secluded environment among features like authoritarianism, the repression and elimination of different points of view, and the abandoning of democratic values. Still, other people in the same surroundings managed to retain their humanity and politeness in spite of these difficult conditions, which can easily convert the morally weak into savages. This implies that there are deviations to every rule. Although on the surface persons may seem identical, their actual character and decisions

can differ significantly. Strong proof of this concept comes from the amazing and sad changes the characters in the book undergo. (Rosenfield, 1961).

Fear and Superstition: Their Function:

The boys' metamorphosis is much influenced by fear. The envisioned "beast" starts to represent their inner anxieties, and as their superstitions develop, so does their slide into lunacy. Simon, the only figure that really knows the reality, comes to see that the beast is a natural component of human nature rather than an outside menace. This realisation causes him to die tragically under the hands of the very lads he sought to enlighten. Simon's passing highlights the ultimate irony of the book: in a world corrupted by evil even the most intelligent and innocent cannot survive. (Rosenfield, 1961).

Apart from its destructive character, Jack utilises fear as a means of control in his quest of dominance over the guys, therefore guiding them as only tools for his will. Jack is bright and intelligent even if he is a dark, psychotic character. This is shown in his use of the children's dread of the beast, the dark, and the unknown—turning it into a weapon to subjugate them and underline his dominance. Jack creates a kind of absolute power by posing himself as their rescuer, able to drive the beast off if they follow his directions. (Golding, 1954).

Jack also transcends just using fear to discipline the lads. Claiming the ability to grant or take life whenever he so wants, he transforms himself to a god-like person. Jack convinces the children that the one they killed wasn't Simon but rather a manifestation of the beast following Simon's terrible death. Only he claims to be able to tell a real human from a beast masquerading as one. Jack gains authority not only over the lads but also over life and death itself since anyone he labels as the beast is instantly killed. Though it is completely a fabrication and deception, he persuades the lads that this is the truth. (Spinks, 2009).

Weakness Against Tyranny:

A prominent negative aspect that becomes evident throughout the novel is the weakness of certain characters and their inability to stand up to the mistreatment they face from bullies or antagonists. Piggy is a prime example. Piggy is one of the most passive and weakest characters even if he is one of the central ones who greatly influences the development of important events—such as the use of the conch, his glasses, and recording the names of the surviving boys—and helps to advance the story. From the beginning of the story, Piggy is shown as completely incapable of defending himself against the verbal and physical insults from Jack, Roger, and others. This weakness encourages the bullies and toxic characters to persist in their mistreatment, ultimately leading to his tragic death near the novel's conclusion. (Spinks, 2009)

Piggy was not the only one who displayed weakness when confronting the antagonists. Ralph, despite facing them on several occasions, also demonstrated weakness through his leniency and indecision when in power. This can also be seen as a form of weakness; had he shown more resolve, the outcome might have been different. As for the little ones, they are excused to some extent, as they are much smaller, both in size and age, compared to the main characters. (Frye, 1962).

What set Piggy's weakness apart was his complete helplessness and fear, even when responding verbally. Despite being similar in size and age to the others, his cowardice and lack of self-confidence contributed not only to his own demise and the triumph of evil but also to the weakening of his friends. He failed to support Ralph and Simon when they needed him most, leaving them to confront the antagonists alone. Instead, Piggy often resorted to complaining and relying on Ralph to defend his rights, like his glasses. (Frye, 1962).

In any setting, there will be both good and evil. To prevent the evil from taking control and overpowering the situation, the good must rise up against it and resist. If they do not, evil will ultimately prevail, as it did in the novel. (Kernan, 1965).

The Foolishness of the Wicked and the Silencing of Intelligent Voices:

Throughout the events of the novel, another recurring theme emerges: suppression. The systematic silencing of anything creative, intelligent, or beneficial to the collective good rather than serving the individual is evident. Any idea, opinion, or voice that warned the majority of dangers or pointed toward positive directions that would serve everyone was consistently suppressed by the foolish, wicked characters throughout the story. Through symbolism and literary analysis, we can deduce that Piggy represents civilization or the scientific aspect of civilization. He embodies this in every aspect, as he is the voice of reason, logic, positive thinking, and creativity whenever a problem arises. He is also the one who suggested using the conch to amplify their voices, and they used his glasses to start a fire. As is well known, fire is fundamental to civilization for building, industry, warmth, and cooking, among other things.

Similarly, Simon represents the second voice of reason and deep thought, rejecting superstitions, fear of imaginary creatures, and returning to rational thinking and experimentation. This becomes evident when Simon himself sets out to verify the existence of the "beast" and its true nature. He climbs the mountain, approaches, and examines the dead pilot's body to confirm that the "beast" is merely a figment of the boys' imagination and that they are afraid of something that doesn't exist.

Rather than listening to these intelligent and creative individuals, they are met with mockery, abuse, and aggression from the psychopathic, negative characters. This hostility escalates to the point where the very

same toxic characters kill these individuals. Piggy, in particular, is subjected to terrible treatment: mockery, ridicule, physical abuse, and ultimately, he is crushed by a large rock. Simon's fate is no better; during a savage, frenzied dance, the others beat and kick him to death on a stormy, rainy night.

The tactic of silencing voices and suppressing those calling for a return to reason, logic, and the rejection of superstitions and the idolization of certain individuals is an age-old strategy. Tyrants throughout history have employed it to eliminate their opponents, enabling them to control the masses by instilling superstitions, creating fear of imaginary enemies, and maintaining their power without resistance. The wicked do not believe in free democratic ideals but rather in controlling people through cruelty and force. Otherwise, things would quickly spiral beyond their control, as they cannot govern intelligent people. Intelligent individuals will not tolerate injustice and oppression. Ultimately, this shows that evil requires a foolish or unintelligent person, as intelligent individuals are rarely evil. In this way, William Golding used the boys on the island as a miniature model and a clear allegory for the policies and tactics of totalitarian regimes, as the methods and strategies are essentially the same.

The Paradox of the Adult World and the Island Society:

The boys' descent into savagery mirrors the chaos and corruption of the adult world they sought to escape. The nuclear war that drives the children to the island symbolizes humanity's destructive tendencies, with the island itself becoming a microcosm of the adult world's flaws. When the naval officer arrives to rescue the boys, his military uniform and weapons represent the same corrupt forces that led the boys to violence. Ultimately, the novel suggests that the adult world is just as flawed as the boys' anarchic society, both being driven by the same destructive forces.

However, the boys, in some way, have a certain justification for their barbarism, as they are not yet adults and lack the same culture and maturity. On the island, they experience absolute freedom for the first time in their lives, without consequences, and act according to their primal instincts, whether good or evil. The adults, on the other hand, have no such excuse. The naval officer's reaction when he first sees the boys on the shore is a brief expression of shock and disbelief. While accustomed to savagery and brutality in the war with adults, he is stunned by the sight of young boys engaging in such violence at their age, especially on an island far removed from the events of the war.

Lord of the Flies as an embodiment of evil in humans:

The novel "*Lord of the Flies*" and the numerous events and various conflicts within it, between the individual and himself, the individual and the group, and the individual and the environment, clearly embody several facets of evil. The character of the Lord of the Flies is merely a physical manifestation of this evil, as everything related to the Lord of the Flies is absolute evil. This begins with the barbaric, savage act committed by Jack when he killed the mother pig while she was nursing her young and then placed her head on a wooden spear as a cruel, primitive pagan ritual, comparable in its brutality to the ancient pagan rituals of human and animal sacrifice as offerings to the old pagan gods, during a time when societies were still primitive and far removed from civilization and the concepts of true humanity.

We can understand the concept of absolute evil in the character of the Lord of the Flies through the encounter and dialogue that took place between Simon and the Lord of the Flies when Simon met him before climbing the mountain to confront the supposed beast. When Simon first saw him, he introduced himself as "I am the Lord of the Flies," where indeed the impaled head was in a state of decay and decomposition,

surrounded by flies from all sides (a metaphor for the ugliness of the physical form of evil if we could see it). The other shocking statement that the pig's head made to Simon was,

"No one can kill me or chase me away; I live inside each one of you, and I am coming to get you."

And the most impactful and shocking thing is that Simon was indeed killed shortly after his encounter with the Lord of the Flies. Here comes the inevitable comparison between the Lord of the Flies and the imagined beast. The beast is what the boys imagined as the evil and the source of the (external) threat that would pounce on them and destroy them in their moment of inattention. In reality, it was just an illusion and fantasies. As for the Lord of the Flies, he is the true and symbolic embodiment of the evil lurking in the souls. This means that the evil and the dangers that might come from it do not necessarily come from an external influence but mostly from within. And his statement,

"I live in every one of you," reinforces this idea.

There is no true definition of the essence of evil on the island except that man himself is evil if he decides to unleash his sinful self by taking control. The actions of the boys against their peers, Piggy, Simon, and Ralph, are nothing but evidence of evil taking over the situation and controlling the minds of the boys, which drove them to commit those heinous crimes. The Lord of the Flies did not exist; it was created and fabricated by Jack and the hunters with their own hands as a manifestation of the evil lurking within them. Ralph's attempt to destroy the pig's head just before the end of the novel is a desperate and late attempt to control or contain the evil on the island, but it was too late. Evil had already been unleashed, and the boys had completely transformed into bloodthirsty monsters that could not be stopped or bargained with. Reason and wisdom had vanished, and savagery was the only ruler on the island.

Deus Ex Machina:

As is widely known by both writers and readers, Deus Ex Machina is an ancient literary technique dating back to the Roman era. It serves as an improbable or unnatural solution to problems that cannot be resolved easily or naturally. This can include a character's rescue, unexpected intervention, or a sudden event that resolves a dilemma, such as a god or a fortuitous occurrence that saves the day.

William Golding's use of this technique to rescue Ralph in a way that seems sudden, unjustified, and unexpected is, in essence, an indirect acknowledgment from the author that good has lost and evil has triumphed. His use of this technique represents a desperate effort to save Ralph after his decisions and actions throughout the story led him to this inevitable fate—defeated and close to death at the hands of his enemies, the embodiments of evil. Had the author refrained from using this method and allowed Ralph to face the consequences of his actions and decisions on the island, the ending would have been far more powerful than the original conclusion. Ralph's death could have served as a stronger message to readers and society about what awaits an individual or society that neglects their rights or deals leniently with toxic, evil, or self-interested figures. In other words, for good to prevail, we must confront evil and injustice with firmness and strength; otherwise, destruction is inevitable.

Conclusion:

Lord of the Flies illustrates the inherent evil within human nature and its destructive potential when societal structures break down. Through the children's descent into barbarism, Golding emphasizes how fragile societal norms and moral values are and how easily they can be dismantled. The boys' regression into savagery reveals the darkness at the core of humanity—a fundamental evil that cannot be eradicated. Simon's and Piggy's deaths serve as stark reminders of the vulnerability of innocence

and the pervasive force of evil. The novel ultimately serves as a powerful allegory about the dangers of unchecked human instincts, highlighting the crucial role of the environment in shaping behavior. The boys' transformation is largely influenced by their isolated and lawless surroundings, demonstrating how, without the constraints of civilization, the darkness within individuals can emerge. This reflects Golding's pessimistic view of human nature and society, where the environment plays a pivotal role in the unleashing of humanity's deepest, most destructive instincts.

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