



LORD OF THE FLIES - CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS AND SYMBOLIC APPROACHES

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MAD FATHERS CROPS

The analyses in this document are based on the **MAD FATHERS CROPS** mnemonic in the [Sophicly Analysis Mastery Toolkit from the library](#).

MAD FATHERS CROPS stands for the following:

Metaphor

Alliteration

Direct address

Facts/foreshadowing

Assonance

Triadic structure

Hyperbole

Emotive language

Repetition

Simile

Contrast

Rhetorical question

Onomatopoeia

Personification

Sibilance

The goal here is to demonstrate that having a strong foundation of knowledge about the most common techniques should be the priority over trying to learn lots of different techniques: in other words, **quality over quantity**.

Of course, this does not mean that you should not learn more techniques, and, in fact, we will, but the point is that you should prioritise building a strong foundation of knowledge and then expand, rather than simply learning lots of techniques but not being able to write about or with them.

CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS





When interpreting *Lord of the Flies*, it is possible to read the events of the story through a literal or a figurative point of view, or a combination of the two.

- One interesting approach is to view *Lord of the Flies* as a straightforward commentary on childhood.
 - Golding has set his young protagonists on an island, surrounded by an impassable ocean.
 - What happens to the boys can be viewed as a type of social experiment whereby their innocence and status as children are abruptly replaced by the harsh necessities of a more adult world.
 - When the boys first find themselves on the island, they see authority and power as having been removed, and they take pleasure in this.
 - As the novel progresses, they gradually reassert governance through differing power models, good and bad.

A SYMBOLIC APPROACH - WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THERE ARE NO RULES?

Alternatively, *Lord of the Flies* can be read more figuratively.

- The island may simply be a device that Golding uses to make a wider and far more troubling comment on society.
 - The boys' descent into primitive hunting, savage fighting and intertribal conflict could be seen as portraying the emergence of their collective unconscious desires as they revert to type.
 - They lose their individual characters and act as a group.
 - This process has a drastically disinhibiting effect, even on such 'good' characters as Ralph and Piggy,
 - and it seems likely that Golding here is directly referencing the terrifying aspects of mob rule,
 - and specifically the behaviour of Hitler's followers in Nazi Germany.

A SYMBOLIC APPROACH - THE ROLE OF THE ISLAND

The island provides catalysing processes -

- hunting,
- the spreading of fire,
- the presence of the jungle
 - – for the emergence of the boys' instinctual behaviours: they prove to be murderous and predatory.
 - This in itself is a frightening prospect for the boys:
 - their deepest desires are revealed,
 - exposing them to a self-knowledge they have no help with.
 - They do not recognize these feelings as being in themselves,
 - and they create the mysterious 'beast' as a metaphorical vessel to carry them.





SIMON TRIES TO EXPLAIN THE BOYS' BEHAVIOUR

Simon's attempt to explain their primitive behaviour is met with derision, which perhaps masks fear.

- Moreover, the reaction of the naval officer and rescuer at the end of the novel offers no recognition or acceptance of the trauma the children have lived through,
 - even though by then he observes that they have been 'having a war' (as he is) and have killed people.
 - Golding offers the boys' behaviour as a demonstration of what society can be without the veneer of the rules and expectations that govern us,
 - as in foreign wars or domestic riots.

A PSYCHOANALYTIC APPROACH - THE ROLE OF THE ISLAND

It may also be that the boys' characters represent different parts of the personality.

- Golding himself recorded his own distrust of the ideas of Freud, but nevertheless it is interesting for the reader to draw upon a psychoanalytic framework, and to look to Freud and his conception of the 'psyche' – the individual personality.
 - Freud believed the psyche is made up of three parts:
 - the id
 - which is concerned with our basic needs and desires;
 - the superego
 - which is centred on moral imperatives and (especially) prohibitions;
 - and the ego
 - which is concerned with negotiating a reality, striking a balance between the id and the superego.
 - On the island, Jack reverts to basic, id-like desires, quickly taking on the role of hunter and provider.
 - However, the fact that he never gains complete power over the boys suggests that bowing to our basic desires can be dangerous and unsatisfying.
 - Piggy could therefore represent the concerns of the superego as he worries about fairness, order and rules.
 - The reader therefore needs to question why the boys destroy Piggy and similarly destroy all the rules on the island.
 - Ralph is the intermediary between Jack and Piggy. As the metaphorical ego, he tries to maintain cohesion in the group by being friends with both boys and trying to find a compromise between them.



