

# *Lord of the Flies* – Symbols

A symbol is something concrete that represents another thing or idea. In *Lord of the Flies* a lot of things we encounter are given a symbolic meaning.

## **The Conch Shell**

The conch shell stands for \_\_\_\_\_.  
It is an actual vessel of political legitimacy and democratic power. As the island civilisation erodes and the boys descend into savagery, the conch shell loses its power and influence among them.

*Because the rules are the only thing we've got.  
If you don't blow, we'll soon be animals anyway.  
He can hold it when he's speaking.*

## **The Glasses**

The glasses represent \_\_\_\_\_.  
This symbolic significance is clear from the start of the novel, when the boys use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and start a fire.

*If the fire's right out, we'll need them-  
He polished his glass again and went back to his subject.  
They blinded me. See?*

## **The Fire**

The fire symbolises \_\_\_\_\_.  
When the fire burns low or goes out, we realise that the boys have lost sight of their desire to be rescued and have accepted their savage lives on the island.

*There's only one thing we can do to get out of this mess.  
We can help them to find us.  
I wonder how far off you could see that.*

## **The Island**

At the beginning the island might be considered paradise on earth (before the arrival of the boys), but soon it is made clear that it rather represents \_\_\_\_\_.  
It is a microcosm representing the world.

*We may stay here till we die.  
Perhaps there aren't any grown-ups anywhere.  
Then gradually the almost infinite size of this water forced  
itself on his attention.*

### **The Parachutist**

The parachutist is a sign from the world of grown-ups, a sign of \_\_\_\_\_.

*If only they could send us something grown-up [...] a sign  
or something.  
But a sign came down from the world of grown-ups,  
though at the time there was no child awake to read it.  
The tangle of lines showed him the mechanics of this par-  
ody.*

### **The Masks**

The masks represent the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **The Beast**

The imaginary beast that frightens all the boys stands for the primal instinct of \_\_\_\_\_ that that resides within all human beings, the dark side of human nature. The boys are afraid of the beast, but only Simon reaches the realisation that they fear the beast because it exists within each of them. By the end of the novel, the boys are leaving it sacrifices and treating it as a totemic god.

### **The Lord of the Flies**

The pig's head impaled on a stake stands for \_\_\_\_\_. This complicated symbol becomes the most important image in the novel when Simon confronts the pig's head in the glade and it seems to speak to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart and promising to have some "fun" with him. (This "fun" foreshadows Simon's death in the following chapter.) In this way, the Lord of the Flies becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast, a symbol of the power of evil, and a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ figure who evokes the beast within each human being. Looking at the novel in the context of biblical parallels, the Lord of the Flies recalls the devil, just as Simon recalls Jesus. In fact, the name "Lord of the Flies" is a literal translation of the name of the biblical name Beelzebub, a powerful demon in hell sometimes thought to be the devil himself.

*As if it wasn't a good island.  
There was a blackness within, a blackness that spread.  
Then he backed away, keeping his face to the skull that lay  
grinning at the sky.*

### **The Butterflies**

The butterflies stand for Simon's \_\_\_\_\_.

# *Lord of the Flies* – Symbols

A symbol is something concrete that represents another thing or idea. In *Lord of the Flies* a lot of things we encounter are given a symbolic meaning.

## **The Conch Shell**

The conch shell stands for **law and order** (civilisation, democracy, authority). It is an actual vessel of political legitimacy and democratic power. As the island civilisation erodes and the boys descend into savagery, the conch shell loses its power and influence among them.

*Because the rules are the only thing we've got.  
If you don't blow, we'll soon be animals anyway.  
He can hold it when he's speaking.*

## **The Glasses**

The glasses represent **reason and logic** (science, insight, wisdom, knowledge). This symbolic significance is clear from the start of the novel, when the boys use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and start a fire.

*If the fire's right out, we'll need them-  
He polished his glass again and went back to his subject.  
They blinded me. See?*

## **The Fire**

The fire symbolises **hope and rescue**. When the fire burns low or goes out, we realise that the boys have lost sight of their desire to be rescued and have accepted their savage lives on the island.

*There's only one thing we can do to get out of this mess.  
We can help them to find us.  
I wonder how far off you could see that.*

## **The Island**

At the beginning the island might be considered paradise on earth (before the arrival of the boys), but soon it is made clear that it rather represents **isolation**. It is a microcosm representing the world.

*We may stay here till we die.  
Perhaps there aren't any grown-ups anywhere.  
Then gradually the almost infinite size of this water forced  
itself on his attention.*

### **The Parachutist**

The parachutist is a sign from the world of grown-ups, a sign of **adult supervision**.

*If only they could send us something grown-up [...] a sign or something.*

*But a sign came down from the world of grown-ups, though at the time there was no child awake to read it.*

*The tangle of lines showed him the mechanics of this parody.*

### **The Masks**

The masks represent the **loss of civilisation, savagery**.

### **The Beast**

The imaginary beast that frightens all the boys stands for the primal instinct of **savagery** (evil, fear, superstition) that resides within all human beings, the dark side of human nature. The boys are afraid of the beast, but only Simon reaches the realisation that they fear the beast because it exists within each of them. By the end of the novel, the boys are leaving it sacrifices and treating it as a totemic god.

### **The Lord of the Flies**

The pig's head impaled on a stake stands for **chaos and evil**. This complicated symbol becomes the most important image in the novel when Simon confronts the pig's head in the glade and it seems to speak to him, telling him that evil lies within every human heart and promising to have some "fun" with him. (This "fun" foreshadows Simon's death in the following chapter.) In this way, the Lord of the Flies becomes both a physical manifestation of the beast, a symbol of the power of evil, and a kind of **Satan** figure who evokes the beast within each human being. Looking at the novel in the context of biblical parallels, the Lord of the Flies recalls the devil, just as Simon recalls Jesus. In fact, the name "Lord of the Flies" is a literal translation of the name of the biblical name Beelzebub, a powerful demon in hell sometimes thought to be the devil himself.

*As if it wasn't a good island.*

*There was a blackness within, a blackness that spread.*

*Then he backed away, keeping his face to the skull that lay grinning at the sky.*

### **The Butterflies**

The butterflies stand for Simon's **goodness and harmony with nature**.