

LORD OF THE FLIES

Whatever its intellectual pretensions, William Golding has created a successful adventure story about a group of boys abandoned on a tropical island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. They are the victims of a war which is still in progress elsewhere. First, they put up an election. A boy called Ralph is elected by a clear majority over another boy called Jack. Ralph, Jack and a third boy called Piggy set out to check if they are indeed on an island. They confirm it by climbing a high hill. On the way back they find a young pig but it escapes before they manage to kill it. During the following days they start to build shelters and decide to put up a rescue fire up on the high hill, which they light with Piggy's glasses. While everyone worried about the chances of rescue, Piggy notices that their fire has gone out of control and is burning the forest. They bring the fire under control, and then notice, that a small child is missing. The youngest children scream in fear of snakes and the senior boys realize but don't speak about their realization that the missing child is burnt alive.

After some days, the boys have settled into a daily routine, trying to adapt as much as possible the daily pattern of their life in England to the tropical island. The youngest children, now called „littluns“, spend a lot of time playing, especially building decorated sand-castles. One day Ralph suddenly discovers a ship on the horizon. The boys rush to the fire and find out that it has gone out. Ralph is disappointed because they have not been discovered and rescued.

Back at their „village“, the hunters are returning, led by Jack, who is celebrating their first kill. It comes to a quarrel between Ralph and Jack after which Jack apologizes to Ralph for letting the fire go out. Ralph wins new respect as chief but

Jack's resentment of him increases. After they have eaten the pig, Ralph calls an assembly. It starts well. Ralph reminds the boys that they have stopped doing essential things, like collecting water, building shelters and cleaning up. He warns them that the fire must be kept burning at all times, since it is more important than hunting pigs. He orders that the fire will always be on the hill, even if this is uncomfortable for people who want to use it for cooking. Finally he states that their community is beginning to break apart because of an unnamed fear which they all feel from time to time, including himself. He suggests that they talk about their fear to find out what it is. So they talk about their fear of a beast living on the island. Several boys tell their feelings until a boy called Percival is speaking. Up to this point a conch has been passed from speaker to speaker: No one has addressed the assembly without holding it in his hands. Jack now breaks this „rule“. He forces Percival into speech. A boy called Simon, who is very shy, tries to explain to the boys that the beast may exist, not as an animal in the woods but as a state of being in themselves. No one takes him seriously and once again the assembly starts to break.

Ralph tries to stop the confusion by asking who believes in ghosts, but despite of Piggy's protests the boys express their irrationality by voting for their existence. Jack tries to stop him and Ralph points out that Piggy has the conch. Jack breaks the rules, however, and destroys the assembly finally by announcing that the hunters will kill the beast. Everybody leaves. Only Ralph Piggy and Simon are left together wondering what to do, and what grown-ups would do in their situation. The hunters can be heard assembling. After a while Piggy points out to Ralph that Jack really hates him.

The following morning 2 boys, the twins Sam and Eric have allowed the fire to go out, but they light it again and warm themselves. As they do so, they see something big on the top of the hill. Terrified they rush back to the camp and wake Ralph, and tell him they have seen the beast. In fact they saw a dead airman who had been killed in a far-off battle and whose parachute has blown him towards the island and dropped him there to bow and sink in the wind. During the following assembly the twins tell what they have seen. Jack wants to hunt the beast immediate, but Ralph points out their responsibilities towards the littluns and claims that it is impossible to track a creature that leaves no trail. He organizes a proper hunt to the only part of the island to which Jack's hunters have never been. The hunt lasts the entire day. In the evening there are only Jack, Ralph and a boy called Roger left. When they reach the hill, they separate. Jack goes on alone, while Ralph and Roger are waiting. But Jack returns quickly to where Ralph and Roger are sitting nervously. He has seen the beast. Ralph decides that they should all go up and see it. Slowly the three boys approach the beast and suddenly face the dead parachutist. When the children see his face they flee down the hillside. Back in the camp Jack blows the conch in order to call an assembly. Ralph tries to be the leader of the meeting but hands over to Jack. Then Jack blames him for not being a good chief. He calls for a vote to reject Ralph, but no one raises a hand. Jack starts to cry and runs away. The children decide to move the fire from the hill to the beach. But once the fire is lit Ralph notices that of the senior boys only Piggy, the twins and a few others remain with him.

Jack has gathered his friends. He plans to kill a pig and use of its meat to attract the beast. He and his hunters finally kill a sow. The sow's head is placed on a stick and left in the woods as an offering for the beast.

Simon has wandered off from Ralph and Piggy to his own secret place in the woods. He comes across the grinning head of the dead pig, which is called „the Lord of the Flies“. He starts to communicate with the Lord of the Flies, has some kind of fit and falls asleep.

Back on the beach Jack and some of his hunters are all painted and naked. They interrupt Ralph and Piggy who are arguing about why things have gone wrong. Some boys steal fire, while Jack invites Ralph and Piggy to eat pig meat that night. After they have gone, Ralph tries to convince the few boys to stay with him but doesn't succeed in it.

That night a storm is building up. Simon wakes and leaves the Lord of the flies and wanders through the woods. He comes to the place where the dead parachutist sits. The rotting corpse scares him but he realizes that it is not a beast. He unloosens the parachute lines from where they have been caught in the rocks and decides that the other children must know the truth. So he starts to walk down the hill. At the same time the others, Ralph's group included, are eating the pig. After eating the excited boys begin to dance to celebrate their triumph as hunters. Suddenly Simon emerges from the woods, and they all attack him with sticks and fists while he cries about the dead man on the hill. No one listens but they tear Simon apart.

After the storm a great calmness descends. Simon's body is carried to the open sea. The following day Jack has organized his group with look-outs. He commands them to watch out for Ralph and Piggy and to beware of the beast while Ralph and his remaining friends are desperate. In the evening they try to sleep, but are attacked by Jack's people. During the fight Piggy's glasses are stolen. The next morning they

decide to go to Jack to get Piggy's glasses back. At this meeting, Jack and Ralph start to fight. Piggy tries to intervene, he appeals for sense but the others start to throw stones at him. Piggy is knocked over the cliff into the sea by a large rock. He is killed instantly. The conch, too, has been smashed into pieces. During the following silence Ralph flees, while the twins are left in the hands of Jack.

Ralph hides in the forest. The only thing he wants to do now, is to survive and not to be caught by Jack, who would never let him alone. As he wandered through the forest he arrives at the Lord of the Flies, **but there is only a skull there**. He strikes at the skull with his stick and breaks it.

In the evening, Ralph hears in the distance Jack's crowd celebrating. He comes close to Sam and Eric, who are now in Jack's service. They tell him, that Jack intends to hunt Ralph and to kill him the following day and give him some meat to eat before Ralph leaves them. He hides himself in a thicket and falls asleep. In the morning he hears Jack talking to the twins and learns that the general area of his hiding-place is known. After some while Jack's people throw heavy stones onto his shelter, but Ralph isn't hurt. Ralph suddenly realizes that he is being smoked out. The wood has been set alight.

He has to leave the thicket and injures a hunter who wants to kill him. He tries hard to think rationally about the best means of self-defense. He runs aimlessly through the woods, coming back to the place where the Lord of the Flies lies. He is again discovered when he tried to hide in a thicket again. Ralph rushes from the woods, with the howling hunters behind him. He emerges on to the open beach, falling over and trying to cry for mercy. He finds himself facing a British naval officer. The hunters emerge from the woods, standing innocent while the officer asks his questions. The grown-up view the children a little critically, but he accepts that for

them everything must be just fun and games. Ralph sobs and soon the other boys cry too. The naval officer prepares to take them off the island.

Comment:

There are many things you could comment on in the book „The Lord of the Flies“. I just want to mention two basic aspects:

The conch

In the very beginning the children discover a big and beautiful conch in the sea. They use it for the assemblies. People can only address the assembly if they hold the conch in their hands. William Golding uses the conch as a metaphor for democracy. In the first chapters democracy is intact. But in time the conch loses importance, so does the democracy. This breakdown starts when Jack forces Percival into speech. The democracy finally stopped existing, as the conch broke into pieces.

But Golding also wants to show how dependent we are in any organization upon symbolic things like a crown, a holy book or a special drink.

Beelzebub

We all once came along this word. The word Beelzebub was adapted from the New Testament which rendered it from the Hebrew „Baal-zebub“, what means „fly-lord“. Baal used to be a mighty god of the Syrian people, against which the Hebrew priest fought in the Old Testament. In the New Testament it is used as „lord of the underworld“ and as „prince of the devils“. In the book the children themselves name the sow's head „lord of the flies“ and create by this their own god.

My personnel opinion

As for me, I enjoyed very much reading this book. It is, from the first to the last chapter, very interesting and exciting. I can really recommend this book to everybody not least because it is very impressive.