

Character Analysis of “Lord of the Flies”

Ralph

Ralph represents leadership, the properly socialized and civilized young man. He is attractive, charismatic, and decently intelligent. He demonstrates obvious common sense. Ralph is the one who conceives the meeting place, the fire, and the huts. He synthesizes and applies Piggy’s intellectualism, and he recognizes the false fears and superstitions as barriers to their survival. He is a diplomat and a natural leader.

Ralph’s capacity for leadership is evident from the very beginning (he is the only elected leader of the boys). During the crisis caused by the sight of the dead paratrooper on the mountain, Ralph is able to proceed with both sense and caution. He works vigilantly to keep the group’s focus on the hope for rescue. When the time comes to investigate the castle rock, Ralph takes the lead alone, despite his fear of the so-called beast. Even in this tense moment, politeness is his default. When Simon mumbles that he doesn’t believe in the beast, Ralph “answered him politely, as if agreeing about the weather.” British culture is famed for civilized reserve in emotional times. By the standards of the society he’s left behind, Ralph is a gentleman.

Jack

Jack represents evil and violence, the dark side of human nature. A former choirmaster and “head boy” at his school, he arrived on the island having experienced some success in exerting control over others by dominating the choir with his militaristic attitude. He is eager to make rules and punish those who break them, although he consistently breaks them himself when he needs to further his own interests. His main interest is hunting, an endeavor that begins with the desire for meat and builds to the overwhelming urge to master and kill other living creatures. Hunting develops the savagery that already ran close to his surface, making him “ape-like” as he prowls through the jungle. His domain is the emotions, which rule and fuel his animal nature.

Piggy

Piggy is the intellectual with poor eyesight, a weight problem, and asthma. He is the most physically vulnerable of all the boys, despite his greater intelligence. Piggy represents the rational world. By frequently quoting his aunt, he also provides the only female voice.

Piggy's intellect benefits the group only through Ralph; he acts as Ralph's advisor. He cannot be the leader himself because he lacks leadership qualities and has no rapport with the other boys. Piggy also relies too heavily on the power of social convention. He believes that holding the conch gives him the right to be heard. He believes that upholding social conventions get results.

Simon

Simon's role as an artistic, religious visionary is established not only by his hidden place of meditation but also by the description of his eyes: "so bright they had deceived Ralph into thinking him delightfully gay and wicked." While Piggy has the glasses — one symbol of vision and truth — Simon has bright eyes, a symbol of another kind of vision and truth.

Simon is different from the other boys not only due to his physical frailty, manifested in his fainting spells, but also in his consistently expressed concern for the more vulnerable boys. Littluns follow him, and he picks choice fruit for them from spots they can't reach, a saintly or Christ-like image. He stands up for Piggy and helps him get his glasses back when Jack knocks them off his head, another allusion to Simon's visionary bent. In addition, he has a secret place in the jungle, where he spends time alone.

EVALUATION

- Students should get the book for full details about the characters