

Five key things about Ralph

1. Golding focuses our attention on **Ralph** at the **start of the novel** as he is the first boy we 'see'. This positions him as the **protagonist**.
2. **Ralph** is elected **chief** (because of his association with the **conch**).
3. He represents **democracy, order, citizenship and moral goodness**.
4. He tries to keep the boys **focused** on what they **need to do** to be **rescued**.
5. He is the one to speak to the **naval officer** at the end.



What do we learn about Ralph at the beginning of the novel?

- Ralph is fair-haired, physically fit and a good swimmer.
- He is playful: standing on his head out of joy and excitement.
- He is confident, taking it for granted that they will be rescued.
- He is diplomatic – when he reveals Piggy's nickname to the other boys, he placates him by arguing that it is '**Better ... than Fatty**'.
- He is fair-minded, as he suggests Jack being in charge of the choirboys when he is disappointed at not being chief.

How does Ralph develop?

- **Chapter Four:** Ralph takes his leadership role seriously, being angry about the signal fire going out.
- **Chapter Five:** He plans for a meeting and starts to show more respect for Piggy as a thinker.
- **Chapter Nine:** He joins in the game that hurts Robert (Chapter Seven) and the dance that kills Simon.
- **Chapter Ten:** He is the only boy to acknowledge, even for a moment, that they killed Simon.
- **Chapter Twelve:** Having used up all his resources, he appears as uncivilised as the other boys, despite not having given in to savagery in the same way. He ends the novel in a fit of '**grief**', which spreads to the littluns but not the remaining older boys.

Five key quotations

1. Initial description of Ralph: '**there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil**' (Chapter One)
2. Ralph (to Jack): '**Don't you want to be rescued? All you can talk about is pig, pig, pig!**' (Chapter Three)
3. Ralph's thoughts on leadership: '**The trouble was, if you were a chief you had to think, you had to be wise.**' (Chapter Five)
4. Ralph (to the conch group): '**I'd like to put on war-paint and be a savage. But we must keep the fire burning.**' (Chapter Eight)
5. Description of Ralph at the end: '**with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept ...**' (Chapter Twelve)

Note it!

Note that, as savagery takes over the boys, Ralph has moments where he forgets why they need to keep the fire burning and Piggy has to remind him.

Exam focus

How can I write about Ralph at the start of the novel? AO1

You can comment on how Golding presents Ralph as good and sensible.

At the start of the novel, Golding immediately presents Ralph as kind and moral. In describing Ralph, Golding clearly uses terms aligning him with good rather than evil: **mildness that proclaimed no devil**. His association with goodness in the theme of good and evil is also indicated by **the use of the noun 'mildness'**, which suggests he is a kind and gentle boy.

Topic sentence refers to specific point in novel

Relevant quotation is linked to a theme

Explains Ralph's link to theme explicitly

Analyses, using specific reference to language

Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about Ralph's development. Use one of the quotations from the list.

Golding shows how Ralph develops as a representative of civilisation in the novel by showing how

Five key things about the theme of good and evil

1. Golding clearly shows the **battle between good and evil** at work on the island.
2. The battle between good and evil is represented in the **rivalry** between the **conch group** and the **savages**.
3. The **beast** also **symbolises** evil on the island.
4. Good is represented by **Ralph, Piggy and Simon**, who believe in the right thing to do.
5. With increasing **savagery**, evil rises and would win if it weren't for the **naval officer's arrival**.

How is good presented in *Lord of the Flies*?

- The conch symbolises democracy, fairness and order, reminding boys of the decency of their home society.
- Ralph and Simon work to build shelters, and Ralph insists on a signal fire to bring about a rescue.
- The island is initially presented as a paradise.
- Simon symbolises pure good in many ways. He is genuinely kind, e.g. picking fruit for smaller boys and giving Piggy his meat when Jack excludes him.
- The conch group go to Jack to ask for Piggy's glasses back **'because what's right's right'**.



How does Golding present evil?

- The beast is the external symbol of evil in the novel, serving to frighten the boys. Simon recognises that this evil in fact exists inside them.
- Hints **foreshadow** problems on the island, e.g. the **'witch-like cry'** in the opening, and the storm before Simon's death – but any real cruelty or danger is brought about by the boys.
- Jack's ability to be cruel is shown from the start in his treatment of Piggy.
- All the boys are involved in mob-related violence that escalates through the novel: the game where Robert is hurt, Simon's death and the hunting of Ralph.

Five key quotations

1. The island as paradise: **'this is a good island'** (Ralph, Chapter Two)
2. Simon's kindness: **'Simon found for them the fruit they could not reach'** (Chapter Three)
3. The storm leading up to the murderous dance: **'The flickering light became brighter and the blows of the thunder were only just bearable'** (Chapter Nine)
4. The nature of the beast: **'What I mean is ... maybe it's only us.'** (Simon, Chapter Five)
5. Evil in Jack's tribe: **'Roger advanced upon them as one wielding a nameless authority.'** (about Samneric, Chapter Eleven)

Note it!

Golding said that 'man produces evil as a bee produces honey' and the novel reveals his belief that evil lurks inside all humankind, even British schoolboys. Such beliefs were influenced by his experiences during the Second World War, which he saw as venting existing evil tendencies in humankind.

Exam focus

How does Golding explore good and evil? AO1

You can write about how Golding uses the boys to explore good and evil.

Golding explores ideas of good and evil through the boys' dramatic battle against the forces of evil within themselves. He makes it very clear that all the problems the boys face are caused by them and rooted in their own inherent evil, shown most symbolically in the haunting figure of the beast. Simon comes closest to understanding this, stating 'maybe it's only us', but failing to make himself clear to the others.

Clear topic sentence sets up point

Focus clearly on author

Literary feature noted

Quotation embedded effectively

Further detail provided

Now you try!

Finish this paragraph about the theme. Use one of the quotations from the list.

Golding shows that good is only apparent in the earlier parts of the novel and in very few characters. For example, Simon's goodness is shown