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عنوان المحاضرة:

Main Themes in Lord of the Flies

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Main Themes in Lord of the Flies

THEMES

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

Civilization and Savagery

The overriding theme of the novel is the conflict between two competing impulses that exist within all human beings: the instinct to live by rules, act peacefully, follow moral commands, and value the good of the group on the one hand; and the instinct to gratify one's immediate desires, act violently to obtain supremacy over others, and enforce one's will on the other. These two instincts may be called "the instinct of civilization" and "the instinct of savagery," as one is devoted to values that promote ordered society and the other is devoted to values that threaten ordered society. The conflict might also be expressed as order vs. chaos, reason vs. impulse, law vs. anarchy, or in any number of other ways, including the more generalized good vs. evil. Throughout the novel, the instinct of civilization is associated with goodness, while the instinct of savagery is associated with evil.

The conflict between the two instincts is the driving force of the novel, explored through the dissolution of the young English boys' civilized, moral, disciplined behavior as they accustom themselves to a wild, brutal, barbaric life as savages in the jungle. *Lord of the Flies* is an allegorical novel, which means that its main ideas and themes are frequently represented by symbols. Appropriately, the conflict between civilization and savagery is represented most directly by the novel's two main characters: Ralph, the protagonist, represents order and leadership, while Jack, the antagonist, represents savagery and the desire for power. In the novel's presentation

of human psychology, different people experience the instincts of civilization and savagery to different degrees.

Piggy, for instance, has no savage feelings, while Roger seems barely capable of comprehending the rules of civilization. But, generally, the novel portrays the instinct of savagery as far more primal and fundamental to the human psyche than the instinct of civilization. Moral behavior, in Golding's view, is often merely a forced imposition of civilization, rather than a natural expression of human individuality. When left to their own devices, the novel seems to argue, people will become cruel, wild, and barbaric. This idea of innate human evil is central to *Lord of the Flies*, and finds expression in several important symbols, most notably the beast and the Lord of the Flies. Only Simon seems to possess anything like a natural, unforced goodness.

Loss of Innocence

As the boys on the island progress from well-behaved, orderly children who hope to be rescued to cruel, bloodthirsty hunters who have no desire to return to civilization, they naturally lose the sense of innocence that they possessed at the beginning of the novel. The painted savages in Chapter 12 who have hunted, tortured, and killed animals and human beings are a far cry from the simple children swimming in the lagoon in Chapter 3. But Golding does not portray this loss of innocence as something that is done to the children; rather, it results naturally from their increasing contact with the innate evil and savagery within themselves.

Civilization, in other words, can mitigate but never wipe out the innate evil that exists within all human beings. The loss-of innocence-theme is represented symbolically by the forest glade in which Simon sits in Chapter 3: at first, it is a place of natural

beauty and peace. But when Simon returns later in the novel, he discovers the bloody sow's head impaled upon a stake in the middle of the clearing. The paradise has been disrupted by the bloody offering to the beast, a powerful symbol of innate human evil disrupting childhood innocence.

MOTIFS

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Christian Iconography

Lord of the Flies is often described as a retelling of Christian parables. While that may be an oversimplification, the book does echo certain Christian images and themes. Christian iconography is not explicit or even directly symbolized in the novel; instead, it functions as a kind of subtle motif in the novel, adding thematic resonance to the main ideas of the story. The island itself, particularly Simon's glade, functions as a kind of Garden of Eden that is gradually corrupted by the introduction of evil. The Lord of the Flies may be seen as a symbol for the devil, since it works to promote evil among mankind. Further, because Simon is the character who arrives at the moral truth of the novel, and because he is killed sacrificially as a consequence of having discovered this truth, his life has certain strong parallels with that of Jesus Christ. His conversation with the Lord of the Flies also parallels the confrontation between Christ and the devil in Christian theology.

However, it is important to remember that the parallels between Simon and Christ are not complete, and to read the novel as a pure Christian allegory would overstate the case and thereby reduce the range of possible readings. For one thing, Simon lacks the supernatural connection to the divine that is the main characteristic of Jesus.

Simon is wise in many ways, but he is not the son of God, and his death does not bring salvation to the island. Rather, his death plunges the island deeper into savagery and moral guilt. For another, Simon dies before he is able to tell the boys what he has discovered, while Christ was killed only after spreading his moral philosophy. In this way, Simon (and the novel as a whole) echoes Christian ideas and themes without developing precise parallels with them. Because *Lord of the Flies* uses its religious motifs to enhance its moral theme, Christian iconography is an artistic technique in the book, but it is not necessarily the primary key to interpreting the story.