

Lesson 9: Symbolism, Part 2

☐ Getting Started

Ralph is a charismatic figure who is not quite up to the tasks life throws at him. He may remind you of someone you know or of a character you have met in other novels or in movies. Piggy complains so much that people often tune him out, but much of what he says has tremendous value. He may also remind you of a neighbor, teammate, relative, or public figure. And have you ever met someone like Jack — artless, self-absorbed, and unpredictable but with a tenacity for life that impresses you?

In this lesson, you'll consider the ways Golding uses the characters and storyline to represent types of people, groups in society, and ideas that have shaped history. When you finish reading *Lord of the Flies*, your characterization of each boy or interpretation of chapters of the book may be a little different from others' views. The only wrong ideas are the ones that are not thoughtful and not based on the author's original text.

Stuff You Need

- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

Ideas to Think About

- How does individual power change in relationships with others?
- Do individuals control groups, or do groups control individuals?
- How do fear and desire for acceptance influence human behavior?

Things to Know

- **Archetypes** are universal patterns in stories of characters, plots, themes, symbols, images, and ideas.
- Common archetypal characters include the hero, the villain, the innocent, and the mentor.
- When objects, characters, and scenarios are used symbolically in a story to represent an abstract idea or principles, the story is called an **allegory**.

Activities☐ **Activity 1: Recognizing Archetypes**

Archetypes are universal patterns that we recognize in stories. They are present in all cultures and through all time periods. They may take the form of people, plots, symbols, images, ideas and more. An archetypal character, for example, may represent a personality type — such as a brute or a coward — or a specific role played, such as a hero or a mentor. An archetypal character can even represent a section of society, such as a political class or religious group.

Common archetypes include the hero, the villain, the innocent, and the mentor. The hero of a story tries to overcome obstacles in order to help others. Typically, heroes are selfless in that they take risks and work hard to better the lives of the people around them. Wonder Woman, Superman, and Spider-Man are all examples of heroes. These heroes don't seek fame or recognition; they act on principle.

The hero often has a mentor (though not all heroes have one). Mentors are wise and share the selfless values of the hero. However, mentors are typically unable to accomplish the goals of the hero because they lack the hero's abilities. Mentors provide much-needed guidance in the hero's quest for peace and justice. Gandalf from *The Lord of the Rings* is an example of a mentor.

Heroes are usually challenged by villains. Villains are driven to acquire dominance, to control others, and to neutralize the heroes. Darth Vader, the Joker, and Voldemort are examples of villains. Villains are very powerful, and the more powerful they become, the more they work to hurt.

The innocent is also a common archetype. An innocent is someone with little power, whose well-being is at stake in the struggle between the hero and the villain. Innocents are typically gentle in character and clearly do not deserve the terrors that will reign down upon them if the villain prevails. M.J. from *Spider-Man* and Prim from *The Hunger Games* are examples of innocents.

Some of the characters in *Lord of the Flies* may be archetypal as well. Think about the characteristics of heroes, mentors, villains, and innocents as you complete the "Recognizing Archetypes" activity page.

☐ Activity 2: Allegory Analysis

When objects, characters, and scenarios are used symbolically in a story to represent abstract ideas or principles, the story is called an **allegory**. Short stories including fables and parables are often allegories used to relay moral messages. Aesop's fables are well-known allegories. Most novels, including *Lord of the Flies*, are not full allegories but often have allegorical elements.

Allegory and symbolism overlap in some ways; however, a symbol is concrete and connects to the characteristics of what it represents, whereas an allegory typically does not. "The Tortoise and the Hare" is an allegory that tells us to work slow and steady and that rushing does not pay off. There are not details of the tortoise that connect the reader to that meaning, though. In contrast, Piggy's glasses are a concrete item that symbolizes sight. Allegories are typically moral, political, religious, or philosophical in nature.

Some scholars believe that *Lord of the Flies* is allegorical and that each of the main characters represents an abstract element of society (consider what Golding identifies as the novel's main theme). Use the "Allegory Analysis" page to explore this idea further.

Wrapping Up

Literary devices can be mixed and matched. Some characters may represent abstract ideas; some may be archetypes. Authors do not need to choose one of these approaches and apply it consistently throughout a piece of work, and interpretations of these elements within a novel vary.

As you read the next chapter, think about the way the actions of the boys may be representative of the types of actions adults portray on a much larger scale.

Homework

You will read Chapter 11 for homework tonight, and you should continue to add to your STEAL character pages.

☐ **Reading and Questions**

Read Chapter 11 and then answer the following questions. Add to the STEAL pages as you read or after you have completed the reading.

1. Who remains in Ralph's tribe at the beginning of Chapter 11?

2. How do the member's of Ralph's tribe want to present themselves to Jack's tribe when they ask for the glasses?

3. What did Ralph bring to meet Jack?

4. How does Piggy die?

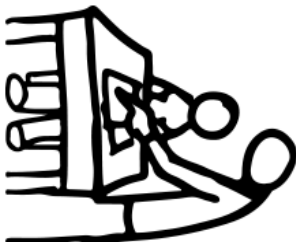
Recognizing Archetypes

Directions: Although the boys in *Lord of the Flies* do not match up perfectly to pure archetypal characters, they do display elements of archetypes. Think about what those elements include. Then choose one character from *Lord of the Flies* who displays some characteristics of a hero, one who displays some characteristics of a mentor, one of a villain, and one of an innocent. Place the boys' names in the boxes labeled for each respective archetype. Only use each character once in the chart. In the rest of the box, cite examples from the novel that support your choices.

The Hero:



The Mentor:



The Villain:

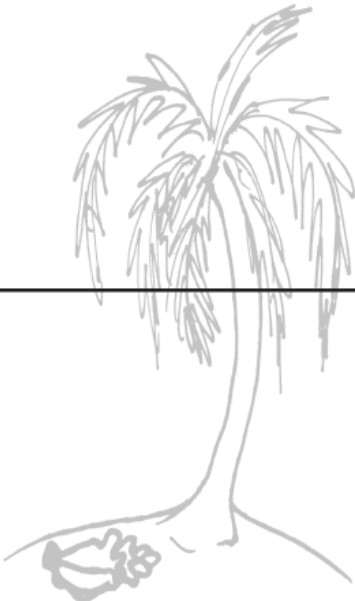


The Innocent:



Allegory Analysis

Directions: Describe abstract ideas — something that is not physical or concrete — that the setting and characters in the novel could represent in society.

What might Ralph's tribe represent?	
What might Jack's tribe represent?	
What might Piggy represent?	
What might Simon represent?	
What might the island represent?	

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? Ideas to Think About

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Things to Know

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Skills

- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. (LA)
- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. (LA)

Introducing the Lesson

At this point in the unit, students have learned about several different approaches to symbolism in literature. In this lesson, students learn about archetypes and allegories.

One common mistake in the interpretation of symbols in literature is to choose one type of symbolism and presume it must be used exclusively to interpret an entire work. However, authors often layer and combine several symbolic strategies within poems and novels.

Activities

Activity 1: Recognizing Archetypes

Students should fill out the boxes that apply. Answers will vary, and some boxes may wind up containing information that seems to conflict with information in another box.

Though the characters in *Lord of the Flies* are not pure archetypes, there are elements of archetypal roles reflected in the four main characters. For example, Ralph demonstrates heroic intentions, but his abilities to accomplish his goals are sorely lacking. Though he genuinely wants all the boys to be safe, have fun, and get rescued, he has trouble holding on to power. He is able to call meetings and lay out some rules, but he is unable to inspire the other boys to follow the rules.

Typical answers would include Piggy=Mentor, Ralph=Hero, Jack=Villain, Littluns=Innocents. Answers may vary to the extent that students may label Simon as the Mentor or the Innocent. Here are some details that students may cite:

- The Hero (Ralph): Ralph genuinely wants the best for everyone. He wants them to have fun, be safe, clean, and get rescued. He is willing to work hard to accomplish these goals, even though he is often frustrated with the difficulty in acquiring help from the other boys.
- The Mentor (Piggy): Piggy shares Ralph's values, and Piggy has knowledge and wisdom Ralph lacks. However, Piggy does not have the physical strength to accomplish the goals and is not respected by the other boys, so he is unable to share the burden of leadership.
- The Villain (Jack): Jack seems to want power for power's sake. He likes to boss the choir boys around for no good reason, and as the novel progresses, he wants to boss everyone around for no good reason. He doesn't care about being rescued, and he stokes fear of the beast instead of trying to quell it.
- The Innocent (Littluns): The Littluns are trusting and naive. They are generally gentle and kind and do not deserve to have bad things happen to them.

Activity 2: Allegory Analysis

Students are asked to consider interpretations of the novel that draw allegorical meanings from the characters and settings. They will fill out a chart prompting them to consider what elements of the novel could represent. This activity may be difficult for some students. Encourage them to recognize that there is no "right" answer but they should still consider what aspects of society are represented by the characters.

Answer Key:

Answers will vary but could align with the following:

- What could Ralph's tribe represent? (It could represent a more democratic government because Ralph was elected and everyone has a "voice" if holding the conch.)
- What could Jack's tribe represent? (Jack's tribe could represent an autocratic government because of the way he is in command.)
- What could Piggy represent? (Piggy could represent rationalism or science that is often ignored within a culture.)
- What could Simon represent? (Simon could represent morality or spirituality within a society.)
- What could the island represent? (The island could represent the world as a whole or a nation divided [ex. the Korean conflict]).

Wrapping Up

Questions to Discuss

- Are there any characters who were not on the handout from Activity 1 that may be archetypes? Other archetypes include the scapegoat, the outcast, the mother figure, the damsel in distress, or the rebel. (Answers will vary.)
- Why was Simon willing to climb the mountain alone? (Answers will vary but may include the idea that Simon is either less fearful than the other boys or more able to cope with and overcome fear.)
- Was it a good decision or a bad decision for Ralph and Piggy to attend the feast? Why? (Answers will vary.)

Things to Review

Review the definition of archetype and some typical character archetypes.

Review the definition of allegory.

Homework

For homework, students will read and answer questions about Chapter 11 and add to their STEAL character pages.

Reading and Questions

1. Who remains in Ralph's tribe at the beginning of Chapter 11?

Piggy, Samneric, and some littluns.

2. How do the member's of Ralph's tribe want to present themselves to Jack's tribe when they ask for the glasses?

They want to clean themselves up and present themselves as civilized. They don't want to paint themselves like savages.

3. What did Ralph bring to meet Jack?

the conch

4. How does Piggy die?

Jack has a boulder set up to be dropped. They drop it on Piggy, and Piggy falls off the cliff to the rocks below.