

Lord of the Flies dramatizes the conflict between the civilizing instinct and the barbarizing instinct that exists in all human beings. The conch shell represents law, order, and political legitimacy, as it grants its holder the right to speak and summons the boys to democratic assemblies. Every artistic choice that Golding makes in the novel is designed to emphasize the struggle between the ordering elements of society, which include morality, order, law, and culture, and the chaotic elements of humanity's savage animal instincts, which include anarchy, bloodlust, the desire for power, amorality, selfishness, and violence. In this chapter, for instance, the bespectacled Piggy is used to represent the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization, as he thinks critically about the conch shell and determines a productive use for it--summoning the other boys to the beach. Golding's assumption throughout the novel is that the constraints of morality and society are learned rather than innate, that the human tendency to obey rules, behave peacefully, and follow orders is imposed by a system of power and control and is not in itself a fundamental part of human nature. In Chapter 1, the boys, still unsure of how to behave with no adult presence to control their behavior, largely stick to the learned behaviors of civilization and order, attempting to re-create the structures of society on their deserted island: they elect a leader, establish a division of labor, and set about systematically exploring the island. Later in the book, this natural object will be sharply contrasted with another--the sinister pig's head known as the Lord of the Flies, which will come to symbolize primordial chaos and terror.