

Sample Literary Analysis: Novel

In this analysis, student writer Elizabeth Delaney explores the theme of fear in William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*.

The Beast of Fear

The opening paragraph identifies the thesis of the analysis.

— In William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*, the boys allow themselves to be terrorized by a beast they create because deep down they want it to exist. By creating a physical object to represent everything they are afraid of, the boys can base their fears on something external and distant, rather than on something close and personal.

When they first arrive on the island, the boys have many implied fears: fear of being left on the island, fear of being on their own without adult assistance, and fear of what may be occurring in the war (World War II) from which they have fled. As a result, they all embrace the concept of the beast, for it is a way to externalize their fears. What the boys want is something they can fear in good conscience, some evil that does not stem from their own personal experience. So they place their fear outside themselves and believe in a beast.

The concept of the "beast" is carefully examined.

— Jack sums up the reason why externalized fear is so much easier to deal with than internal fear when he says, "If there was a snake we'd hunt it and kill it." It's a simple question of power. The boys never would have thought that they were responsible for the appearance of the beast, but they did believe they could be responsible for its demise or destruction. If the beast is something that can be destroyed, there is the potential that everything can turn out all right, the possibility that all the evil that the boys perceive on their island could be purged with the removal of this one creature. In one sense, Jack's cause is a noble one: purifying his world of evil. However, he goes about looking for the beast in all the wrong places, and as a result, the boys commit several horrible crimes. In fact, part of Golding's message is that to "fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill" is really catering to the true inner beast itself.

In the final paragraph, the writer shares a universal truth about the "beast."

— The development of the beast in *Lord of the Flies* is not an unusual one. We are always looking for a beast or a scapegoat to destroy to solve our problems. And, as the Nazis set out to exterminate the Jews, and Stalin the freedom of the individual, the boys create the beast as a safety net, an outside evil that protects them from the knowledge of their true nature as fallen creatures or "beasts" themselves. ■