

Worksheet 3. Major Symbols in *Lord of the Flies* (teacher version)

A symbol is an object or other entity used to represent or suggest something else that is either implicitly or explicitly associated with it.

Symbols take the form of visual images, words, and gestures used to convey an idea or belief. All human cultures use symbols to express underlying ideals and structures.

Use the chart to consider some of the major symbols in the novel.

Symbol	What is it?	What does it symbolize?
<p>Island</p>	<p>What does it look like? It is a tropical island with palm trees, a protected lagoon, and a vast ocean visible from higher points (chapter 1 provides many details).</p> <p>What are its most prominent features? The lagoon, the mountain, and the rocky formations at one end</p> <p>What is good about it? Food and fresh water are available and the temperature is moderate. There are few external dangers.</p> <p>What is bad about it? It is completely isolated from the outside world and prone to severe storms.</p>	<p>The island can be seen as a symbol of planet Earth, positioned in a vast surrounding universe and able to provide humanity with food, water, and shelter—but also prone to severe storms of various types.</p>
<p>Conch</p>	<p>What does it look like at the beginning? It is a large, richly colored seashell with a hole at one end that makes it useful to produce loud sounds (chapter 1).</p> <p>How do the boys use it? They use it to call meetings and as an object that signifies the right to speak.</p>	<p>The conch symbolizes order, civilization, and responsible government. In tribal cultures, conchs have been used as trumpets for a variety of reasons.</p>

William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" for the Common Core

	<p>How does its appearance change? In time its colors fade and it appears increasingly fragile.</p> <p>What happens to it? It is shattered when the boulder hits Piggy, who is holding it (chapter 11).</p>	
<p>Lord of the Flies</p>	<p>What does it look like? It is the massive head of a sow impaled on a stick, rising above the ground and, at least at first, surrounded by buzzing flies—a gruesome and repulsive sight.</p> <p>Why does Jack put the sow's head on a stick? (chapter 8) He deems it a placating tribute to the "beast." This shows a flair for the dramatic and an ability to manipulate the others.</p> <p>What does it represent to Simon? He stares at it in fascination and hears it warn of evil and danger. He was right—this evil would emanate from the boys themselves.</p> <p>What does Ralph see when he looks at it as he flees the hunters? It is a bleached out skull on a stick, but no longer threatening.</p>	<p>Beelzebub, a biblical name for the devil, translates to "lord of the flies." This Lord of the Flies effigy is a symbol of evil and savagery, both of which come not from the sow, but from the boys themselves.</p>
<p>Fire</p>	<p>Why does the first fire in the book rage out of control? What does it cause? The young boys create a fire too big to control—they are not experienced with such things. It burns trees and foliage, and results in the probable death of one of the small castaways. (chapter 2)</p>	<p>Fire is one of the archetypal elements: earth, air, water, and fire. It contains within it both the constructive and destructive potential of humankind. In its capacity to provide the boys with protection, food, and comfort, it symbolizes life. In its capacity to herald rescue from a passing ship, it symbolizes</p>

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	<p>What is the purpose of the fire on the mountain? It is intended as a hope for rescue from the outside world. It also provides light in darkness and a way to cook meat.</p> <p>Describe the fire at the end of the novel. This is a huge fire intended to smoke Ralph out of hiding. Ironically, Jack is responsible for the fire that finally leads to rescue.</p>	<p>hope. In its capacity to set the jungle ablaze and smoke out a hidden victim, it symbolizes the destructive savagery of mob violence.</p>