

The Character of Ralph - Transcript

Ralph: 'The rules! You're breaking the rules!'

Jack: 'Who cares?'

Narrator: 'Ralph summoned his wits.'

Ralph: 'Because the rules are the only thing we've got!'

Presenter: In this passage, Ralph shows his mature, fair characteristics, in a passionate speech to the rest of the stranded boys in *Lord of the Flies*.

His repeated mention of 'the rules' points to the book's overall theme of civilisation.

Yet his urgent, short, punctuated sentences hint at the cracks showing in a group that is beginning to break down.

Early on, Ralph, noted for his 'stillness', and his 'size and attractive appearance' by the other boys is elected leader on the trail of the mysterious beast that they believe to be on the island, whilst the rest of the boys bicker about who should lead, Ralph instinctively steps up.

Ralph: 'I'm chief. I'll go. Don't argue.'

Presenter: He uses concise, commanding dialogue showing his brave and decisive traits.

Yet the reader is told of his nails, 'bitten down to the quick' - which hints at a self-doubt that leads to key moments of hesitation.

Whilst Ralph takes charge, organising the building of fire and shelter, he struggles to keep order, with Jack bringing arguments against his leadership.

Ralph, elected through a vote, represents democracy, whilst Jack's violent, threatening command is that of a dictator.

Influenced by his experiences in World War Two, Golding's characters explore different types of leadership and how quickly society can break down.

Conflicting priorities - and fear of the beast create even greater divisions... Divisions that lead Ralph and his friend Piggy to make a doomed last stand.

Ralph tries to reason with the other boys...

Ralph: 'Which is better, law and rescue... or hunting and breaking things up?'

Presenter: ...but is met with a frenzied 'storm of sound' in response, and the tensions boil over into violence, with Piggy being killed and later Ralph fleeing as 'hopeless fear on flying feet'.

He narrowly avoids death when help arrives in the form of a naval officer, who represents the civilisation that Ralph has yearned for.

At the end of the book, speaking to the officer, Ralph is suddenly consumed by 'great, shuddering spasms of grief'.

What do you think is the symbolism of these tears?

What do they suggest of his character and his experience of the darkness of human nature?