



Understanding Lord of the Flies: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents (The Greenwood Press "Literature in Context" Series)

By Kirstin Olsen

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A seemingly simple tale of schoolboys marooned on an island, *Lord of the Flies* has proven to be one of the most enigmatic and provocative pieces of literature ever published. This casebook probes the many layers of meaning in the novel, examining its literary, philosophical, historical, scientific, and religious significance. Beginning with a literary analysis that explores the universality of the novel's characters, the story is considered as subversion of the adventure tale, comparing it to such classics as *Treasure Island* and *Robinson Crusoe*. From these literary depictions of savagery, this study delves deeper, confronting the long-running philosophical and biological debates about human nature that have absorbed such influential thinkers as Rousseau and Darwin. The full meaning of *Lord of the Flies* is further contextualized by tracing historical views on civilization, from the Victorian perspective, to the very real horrors of World War II. This casebook integrates analysis and primary documents, with excerpts from materials as diverse as the Bible, the writings of Darwin, and war crimes interviews, to explore the very nature of human aggression and evil. This book will spark students to consider intriguing connections between Golding's masterpiece and broader concepts of civilization, altruism, political leadership responsibilities, and the history of western imperialism.

The interdisciplinary approach of this casebook helps students situate the lessons of *Lord of the Flies* in the context of Education, War and Postwar, the Adventure Story, Religion, and Biology and Evolution. The six topic sections integrate original illustrations and photos, literary excerpts, and primary documents and historic writings that help contextualize the work. Thought-provoking ideas for class discussions and research topics, with carefully chosen further reading suggestions enhance this volume as a teaching tool.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up-A book to help students understand a complex novel. Olsen first offers literary analysis and critical overviews of characters, themes, and relevance to everyday life. Next, she deals with the concepts of civilization and savagery and British Imperialism, and then goes on to describe the British school system. She also covers religion as it relates to the novel and the nature of man from a biological perspective. Finally, the author explores why the novel is so pessimistic. Each chapter ends with a wide variety of discussion and essay questions and suggests readings and videos. This book will encourage students to link the story to real-life experience, and will help anyone trying to flesh out the levels of meaning in *Lord of the Flies*.

Sandra L. Doggett, Urbana High School, Ijamsville, MD

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Review

"This book will encourage students to link the story to real-life experience, and will help anyone trying to flesh out the levels of meaning in *Lord of the Flies*."-School Library Journal

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About the Author

KIRSTIN OLSEN has worked as book editor, high school English teacher, artist and author./e Her published books include *Chronology of Women's History* (Greenwood 1994), *Remember the Ladies: A Woman's Book of Days*, and *Daily Life in 18th- Century England* (Greenwood 1999).

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