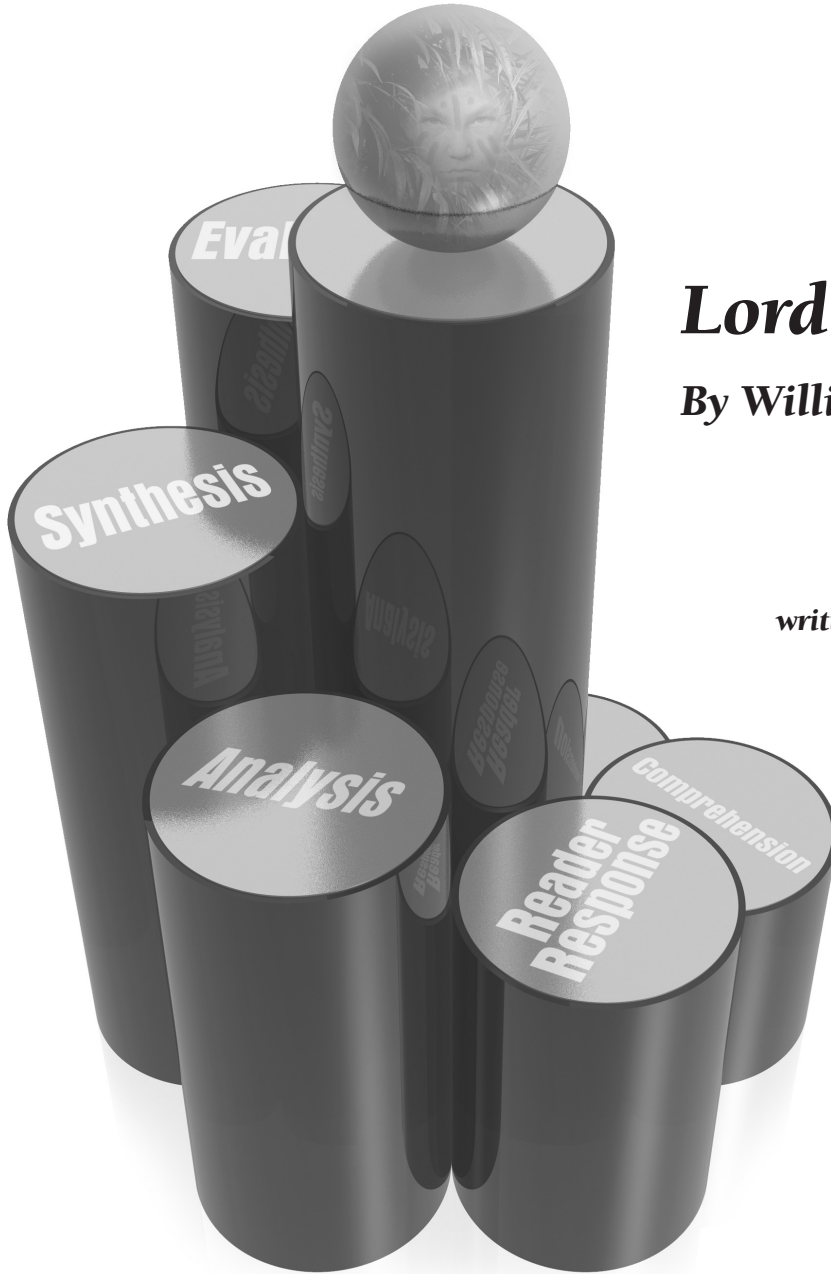


Using  
*Bloom's Taxonomy to  
Explore Literature*

# Levels of Understanding



## *Lord of the Flies*

By William Golding

written by Stephanie Polukis



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## Introduction to Levels of Understanding

FOR MANY STUDENTS, studying literature is like being lost in an alien universe, filled with hidden symbols, structures, and meanings that only a scholar can uncover. Without a teacher's direction, students lack the skills and confidence to evaluate a work of literature on their own, and instead, will frequently turn to resources such as the Internet for guidance. As a result, they assume another writer's views instead of developing their own.

*Levels of Understanding* breaks down complex questions students will encounter into smaller parts, showing the steps a critical reader should take in order to develop a sound evaluation of a text. Each section of the guide contains five types of questions representative of Bloom's learning domains—starting with the most basic and foundational skill, knowledge and comprehension, and gradually building to the highest skill, evaluation. All the way, reluctant students are provided with the scaffolding they need to advance from one level of understanding to the next.

The five types of questions, again, representative of Bloom's domains, are as follows:

- **Comprehension**—will ask the most basic questions to ascertain the students' fundamental understanding of the text: plot facts, character identification, etc.
- **Reader Response**—will ask the students to “respond” to the text by relating it to personal experience or by presenting an opinion on a character or event.
- **Analysis**—will require students to study how various techniques and literary or theatrical devices (diction, symbolism, imagery, metaphors, asides, soliloquies etc.) function in the text. Analysis questions do not ask the student to merely identify or define a literary, theatrical, or rhetorical device.
- **Synthesis**—will bridge the gap between the analysis and evaluation questions, requiring students to look at other scenes in the text and draw conclusions about themes, motifs, or a writer's style. Often, a synthesis question will require the student to draw on prior knowledge—what has been learned in class or through research—and/or information from sources other than the literary title being studied in order to arrive at a satisfactory answer.
- **Evaluation**—will ask the student to make a qualitative judgment on the text and determine whether a particular aspect of it is effective or ineffective.

Other books may list Bloom's taxonomy, define the terms, and offer a general example or two. *Levels of Understanding*, however, provides the teacher with the title-specific questions to allow you to effectively bring Bloom into your classroom.

In addition, unlike other available products that claim to address Bloom's “higher order thinking skills,” *Levels of Understanding* does not teach students how to answer questions about a particular text, but instead, helps them develop skills to evaluate literature critically and without guidance. These are skills that will not only help students prepare for standardized tests like the Advanced Placement Language and Literature exams, the SATs, and the ACTs, but will also give students the self-assurance to develop and articulate a personal view—a skill that will be highly advantageous to them in college.

This product, however, is not geared toward upper-level students only, but is a versatile guide that can be used for students of all ability levels—remedial through honors. The teacher may customize the product to fit the class's objectives and goals, determining which questions the students will answer. Additionally, the guide is entirely reproducible, and each major division begins on a new page, so you may use *Levels of Understanding* for the whole work of literature or only a specific section. ♡



## How to Use this Unit

EACH *Levels of Understanding: Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Explore Literature* unit is intended to be a deep and rich component of your literature program, whether your goal is to prepare your students for a large-scale assessment like the AP Literature exam or to challenge your students to read carefully and to think deeply about what they have read.

The questions in this guide are designed to be flexible and meet your needs. They can be used as

- homework questions when students read the text independently.
- in-class reading check questions and “bell-ringer” journal entries.
- class discussion questions and prompts.
- focus questions for pre-writing and essay planning.
- review and study questions for assessment.

While the Teacher's Guide contains an answer key, you will find that the higher-order questions (especially synthesis and evaluation) have model answers that represent more than one possible response. It would be inappropriate to penalize a student whose well-reasoned and supportable answer did not match the “correct” answer in the guide.

For this reason, we strongly recommend that you view the questions in this guide as learning activities and not as assessment activities.

Many of your students are likely to find the higher domains new and perhaps intimidating. Others might be alarmed at having to support their reader-response reactions and their evaluations with an accurate comprehension of the text. The questions in this guide should act as both scaffolding and safety net, guiding your students through a new reading and thinking process and allowing them to practice without fear of “failure.”

The writing prompts, however, provide rich assessment and evaluation opportunities. Every prompt is designed to invite your students to operate in one of the higher order domains, thus giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability, and giving you the opportunity to evaluate their progress.

Whether you use *Levels of Understanding: Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Explore Literature* as the core of your literature curriculum or as a supplement, the guide and writing prompts are designed to help your students attain a deep understanding of the works they read. Ideally, they will gain the type of understanding demanded by Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and most state standards, including the Common Core State Standards of the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association. 🍎



## Introduction to *Lord of the Flies*

### The Cold War

ALTHOUGH THE SOVIET UNION and the Western powers (i.e., France, Great Britain, and the United States) were allies during World War II, they grew mistrustful of each other toward the end of the war and in the post-war period. The Soviets believed that the West had allowed the USSR to bear the majority of war casualties, and by assisting Germany in redevelopment, it was leaving the USSR vulnerable to another invasion. Furthermore, many in the Soviet Union thought that the United States wanted to become a world empire and was intending to take over Europe.

The West, on the other hand, suspected that the Soviets were taking advantage of the Eastern European countries that had been destroyed in the war. In the countries they had “liberated” from the Nazis, the USSR was establishing Communist governments that were loyal to the point of dependent on the USSR. Winston Churchill referred to the formation of these eastern Soviet satellite states as an “**Iron Curtain**.” According to Churchill, the countries behind the “Curtain” were “subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow.” Although the war had ended, and Germany was no longer a threat, the tensions between the West and the Soviet Union developed into a **Cold War**, a battle of ideological and political rivalry, devoid of actual military conflict.

Fearing the spread of Communism and an over-powerful USSR, the United States also instituted a series of programs to help the countries in western Europe that had been newly liberated from the Nazis. The **Truman Doctrine** (1947) gave \$400 million in military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey in order to prevent their becoming Communist. The **Marshall Plan** (European Recovery Program: 1948-1952) granted an additional \$13 billion in aid to Western European countries in the **Organization for European Economic Cooperation**, including West Germany, France, Belgium, and Italy. Support was offered to the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries as well, but it was declined. While the Marshall Plan did help the European countries in post-war industrial and economic turmoil, allowing the countries to manage their own governments, it also facilitated and supported Communist opposition. The United States also helped establish the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization**, or **NATO** in April 1947. The organization established a collective defense treaty among Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Greece,

and Turkey. An attack on one country would incite a military response from them all.

The Soviet Union was alarmed by the actions of the United States in Europe and began to believe that its suspicions of U.S. supremacy and a capitalist takeover were valid. In response, it began establishing its own political, economic, and military pacts with countries that had been recently liberated, such as Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania. Through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, also known as **COMECON** (1949), the USSR gave assistance to nearby countries to help them build up their industry, facilitate production and trade, and establish Communist governments. The Communist Information Bureau, or **Cominform**, helped unite the Communist governments, spread propaganda, and eliminate dissention. While these programs established mostly political, economic, and ideological ties between the countries in the Eastern Bloc, the **Warsaw Pact** (1955), like NATO, united the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania under a collective defense treaty.

The tensions and suspicions between the United States and the USSR also resulted in an **arms race** and subsequently, a fear of nuclear war. The United States had already proven its nuclear capacity when it dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (August 6, 1945) and Nagasaki (August 9, 1945) in World War II, causing Japan to surrender and the war to end. The USSR tested its first atomic bomb in 1949, and by 1953, both the Soviet Union and the United States had the hydrogen bomb. Furthermore, intercontinental missiles could be launched from land or from sea (by submarine). The arms race contributed to the division of Europe between Western and Soviet influences; countries who did not have access to nuclear weapons looked to one of the two superpowers for protection. In addition, many of the countries’ civilians feared nuclear war, building bomb and fallout shelters and leading school children through “Duck and Cover” drills. The fear of nuclear war also influenced films, television shows, and literature of the 1950s. In *Lord of the Flies*, for instance, when Ralph tells Piggy that his father will rescue them, Piggy responds, “Didn’t you hear what the pilot said? About the atom bomb? They’re all dead.” While some critics believe that the novel takes place during the end of World War II, it could also take place in an imagined third world war, in which nuclear war is a reality instead of merely a fear. 🍌

**Levels of Understanding:**

Using Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains  
to explore William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

# Writing Prompts

**Section One: Comprehension, Analysis:**

Critics generally acknowledge that *Lord of the Flies* is not merely an adventure narrative but an allegory and a cynical reflection on human nature. Write a well-organized and reasoned essay in which you explain how Golding reveals in the first two chapters that this novel is indeed an allegory.

**Section Two: Analysis, Synthesis:**

The central conflict of the novel, between Ralph and Jack, emerges in Chapters Three and Four. Write a well-supported essay in which you analyze the techniques Golding uses to develop the conflict and suggest that it signifies more than a mere childish rivalry.

**Section Three: Comprehension, Analysis:**

Depending on the frame of reference within which one interprets the allegorical significance of *Lord of the Flies*, most of the major characters represent some element of society, civilization, or human nature. Some have even identified the characters and situations with figures and events of the Cold War. Write an organized and thoughtful essay in which you analyze the role Piggy plays on the island and how his contributions are significant on both the surface and symbolic levels of the novel. Draw your support primarily from Chapters Five and Six.

**Section Four: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation:**

The titular image and symbol of the novel, the Lord of the Flies, is the head of the slain sow on a spear. The phrase "lord of the flies" is a literal translation of *Ba'al Zebub*, a common Old Testament demon who also appears in the New Testament as *Beelzebub*. Write a well-organized and supported essay in which you argue the extent to which this allusion enhances or diminishes the reader's understanding of the nature of evil and its role in the text.

**Section Five: Analysis, Synthesis:**

A common misinterpretation of the character of Simon in *Lord of the Flies* asserts that he is a Christ- or Messiah-figure. Recent critics, however, argue that Simon more strongly echoes the prophets of the Judeo-Christian Old Testament. Write a reasonable and well-supported essay in which you support or refute this interpretation.

**Section Six: Analysis, Synthesis:**

One aspect of New Historicist Criticism is the idea that a work of literature is inevitably shaped by the social and historical context in which it is written. In a well-organized and supported essay, explain how *The Lord of the Flies* is a product of the Cold War period and reflects some of the common fears, concerns, and ideas of the period.

**Section Six: Analysis, Synthesis:**

As an allegory, *Lord of the Flies* can be interpreted from a number of perspectives, including the mythological/archetypal and the psychoanalytic. Choose one of these perspectives and write a well-organized essay in which you assert and defend your understanding of the allegory. 🍌



**Levels of Understanding:**  
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 to explore William Golding's*

## *Lord of the Flies*

SECTION ONE: CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

### Comprehension

1. When and where does the story take place?

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2. Describe the landscape of the island in detail.

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3. In Chapter One, when Ralph, Simon, and Jack go exploring, why isn't Jack able to kill the pig?

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4. List some of the some rules that Ralph establishes to maintain order on the island.

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5. Define what the following terms mean in the context of the novel: the scar, creepers, and the beast.

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6. In general, how do the boys feel about being stranded on the island?

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# Lord of the Flies

## SECTION TWO: CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

### Comprehension

1. What are a few sources of the growing animosity between Jack and Ralph?

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2. Why is Jack personally obsessed with hunting the pigs?

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3. What additional information is presented about the beast in Chapters Three and Four?

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4. Why does Roger not hit Henry with the stones?

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5. How does the war paint bring about a change in Jack? Why?

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### Reader Response

1. Are you surprised by the fact that the boys do not follow Ralph's orders and play instead of working? Explain your answer.

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## *Lord of the Flies*

### SECTION THREE: CHAPTERS FIVE AND SIX

#### Comprehension

1. What issues does Ralph discuss at the meeting in Chapter Five?

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2. What does Piggy mean when he says that there aren't ghosts "Cos things wouldn't make sense. Houses an' streets, an'—TV—they wouldn't work"?

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3. What reminder of the outside world do the boys discover? What might it signify?

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4. What do Samneric see that they mistake for the beast? What about the object would lead them to make this mistake?

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#### Reader Response

1. At the meeting in Chapter Five, was Ralph wise or foolish to speak to the boys the way he did? Could he have done something differently to make his speech more effective? Explain.

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2. Do you think the boys' vote on whether ghosts exist is foolish? Explain your answer.

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## *Lord of the Flies*

### SECTION FOUR: CHAPTERS SEVEN AND EIGHT

#### Comprehension

1. Describe the “game” the boys play immediately following the boar attack.

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2. How does the group of boys end up divided into two separate tribes?

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3. What is the “Gift for the Darkness”?

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4. What does the Lord of the Flies tell Simon?

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#### Reader Response

1. Does the display of Jack’s vulnerability in Chapters Seven and Eight contradict his character or develop it? Why?

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2. Does Simon’s experience with the Lord of the Flies advance Golding’s overall theme, or is it an unnecessary digression and delay in the action?

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# *Lord of the Flies*

## SECTION FIVE: CHAPTERS NINE AND TEN

### Comprehension

1. Describe in detail how Simon is murdered.

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2. From what point of view is the scene involving Simon's death presented?

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3. What techniques do the boys in the two tribes use to deal with Simon's death?

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4. What is Castle Rock? When did the boys first discover it? What makes the location easy to defend?

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5. What do Jack, Maurice, and Roger steal from Ralph's tribe at the end of Chapter Ten? Why?

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### Reader Response

1. Do the boys know that "the beast" is actually Simon? How do you know?

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