

Lord of the Flies Study Guide: Connections

The Connections section of the Study Guide provides intertextual and interdisciplinary resources to help deepen and broaden your experience with the novel.

Freudian Psychology — Political Organization — Christian Mythology

Basic Christian Mythology

This is presented as a story. Your religious beliefs or lack thereof are your own business. Much of this story is from memory, with help from Bill Racicot and a few different versions of the bible.

The story...

According to tradition, God and his angels live happily in Heaven. Lucifer, whose name means "the light bringer," is the chief among the angels. Lucifer hopes to supercede God, and so he raises up an army in an effort to take over Heaven. Naturally, the side with God on it wins and Lucifer and his followers are ejected from heaven and hurled down into Hell. Lucifer's name changes to Satan, a.k.a. The Devil, and the angels who were his followers become the devils and demons of Hell.

The Book of Genesis from the Bible details the creation of the world, including the first humans Adam and Eve, who live in the Garden of Eden, a natural earthly paradise. The Garden of Eden is uncorrupted and Adam and Eve live in a state of innocence and grace. Adam tends and guards the garden. God lets Adam and Eve eat the fruit of any tree except the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—if they do so, they will lose their immortality and die. The serpent (snake), the most cunning of all God's animals, suggests that Eve eat some fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Eve resists because she knows it is forbidden, but the serpent convinces her that she won't die, and so she disobeys the will of God and eats the fruit, offering some to Adam, who also eats it—this is known as Original Sin and taints every person ever after. God is angry and casts them out of the garden. This is the fall of man or the fall from grace. The imperfections of humans (such as illness, despair, crime, etc.) result directly from The Fall. Forever after humans are fallen beings, born impure and sinful, yet full of longing to return to the natural state of grace and innocence embodied in the paradise of the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve have two children, named Cain and Abel. Cain is a farmer and Abel is a shepherd. Cain gives some of his harvest as a sacrifice to God. Then Abel slaughters the firstborn lamb of his sheep and offers the best parts to God as a sacrifice. God accepts Abel's offering, but rejects Cain's offering. Cain is upset and soon kills his brother Abel.

Society springs up and humans spread around the world. Many stories could be told of the things that happen during this period, such as the Tower of Babel, the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the tales of King Solomon, Samson and Delilah, or of David and Goliath. Many of these tales can be looked up in collections of children's Bible stories or read directly in the bible by using the index to find the right sections. [Authors note: *I am going to skip them here in the interests of focusing on the central events of the Christian mythos, but I mention them so that you will be aware of their existence and of the fact that many texts (in every sense of the word) in the Judeo-Christian world allude to those Bible stories and others.*]

Many generations after The Fall, God decides that the world is a wicked place and needs to be cleansed. He sends a great flood to destroy all life. He chooses a man named Noah and his wife to be the sole human survivors. It is their job to build a big boat and gather two of every animal onto the boat. After 40 days and 40 nights, the flood subsides and they land safely. This is known as The Great Flood. God promises never to do that again.

Generations after the Flood, a prophet named Moses leads the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt. Through Moses, God performs the miracle of parting the Red Sea to allow the Jews to cross out of Egypt. Their escape from Egypt is known as The Exodus. Later, Moses goes up a mountain and communicates with God, receiving the 10 Commandments. These are the first set of written laws. One of these laws forbids worshiping gods other than God. Those who do not worship the Judeo-Christian God are considered the unenlightened, fearful herd. At one point while Moses is meditating, his followers make a gold idol of the cow-god Ba'al and begin worshipping it. Moses returns and tells them that God will punish them for breaking the Commandments.

[Author's note: *we now time-warp forward, skipping many generations of Isrealites and classic Bible stories.*]

Generations after Moses, God makes the Virgin Mary pregnant with his son, Jesus. His birth is what Christmas celebrates. After Jesus grows up he is baptized, and then begins his prophetic ministry; that

is, his mission to preach the Kingdom of God and to declare the will of God for mankind. He gathers twelve disciples, followers who learn from his prophecies and teachings. It is Jesus' destiny to willingly sacrifice himself so that everyone's sins, particularly Original Sin, may be forgiven.

Jesus has many adventures and performs many miracles. At one point, Jesus must go to the desert to meditate and fast for 40 days. While Jesus is there, Satan appears before him in a ghastly vision and tempts him money, power, and food. Jesus resists. Eventually, he returns from the desert and rejoins his disciples.

One night, during dinner with his disciples, Jesus foretells of his suffering (that he will be betrayed by one of them), death, and resurrection. To prove this is all true and voluntary, Jesus then leads three of his disciples to a very high mountain (symbolically halfway between Heaven and Earth), where he undergoes the Transfiguration from Jesus to the Christ figure, the true Son of God. He then comes down from the mountain and begins his priestly ministry.

Soon after, Jesus' disciple Judas betrays him, and the Roman soldiers arrest him. Jesus (now also known by the title Christ) willingly goes with the Roman authorities, knowing full well that they intend to execute him. Because he and his followers now consider him to be a sacrificial figure that will die to cleanse humankind of Original Sin, he is now known as the Lamb of God.

The Roman authorities sentence Jesus to death by crucifixion (being nailed to a cross). The authorities ask the people of the town if they would like to pardon any of the criminals scheduled to be crucified, specifically Jesus. The assembled crowd of townsfolk, some of whom are his followers, instead select a petty thief named Barabas. Jesus and the two remaining criminals carry their crosses to the hill, and on the way the crowds of townsfolk surround them, harassing them with cruel words. They all watch Jesus and the two other criminals get crucified. Christ dies and is buried in a cave, with a huge stone rolled across the entrance.

After three days, Christ rises from the dead, in fulfillment of the prophecy, thus proving that he is the Son of God. This is known as the Resurrection. This is what Easter celebrates. Christ then urges his followers, the apostles, to spread the gospel (the word and teachings of God) to everyone in the world, enabling him or her to be saved from going to hell. Along with Satan and the other fallen angels, humans who were sinful in life and not forgiven by Christ inhabit Hell.

The last book of the Bible is a prophetic book talking about the end of the world (The Apocalypse). The Apocalypse is supposed to be a ball of fire. The book says that one can tell it's coming because a whole bunch of bad things go wrong in the world.

A Note on the Devil

The Devil is known by many names, among them Lucifer, Satan, Ba'alzevuv, and Beelzebub. This last one in English means "lord of flies." Flies are associated with decay, rotting, and dirty things; excrement is the dirtiest thing there is. Hence, the lord of flies is also the lord of dung. Therefore Devil is the ultimate representative of unclean things, and is the embodiment of lusts and cruelties; it is evil personified. The devil is also known as a sower of discord and disorder, and is cast in opposition to light and order.

Sources Consulted

King James Bible

The Holy Bible. New York, NY: Hawthorn Books. 1958.

Good News Bible: Catholic Study Edition. Hartford, CT: Sadlier. 1979.

Bill Racicot