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Allegory and Symbolism in Lord of the Flies

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Introduction

William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is not merely a story of boys stranded on an island; it is a layered allegory that can be read on religious, political, and psychological levels. The novel's symbols — the conch, Piggy's glasses, the Lord of the Flies, the fire — give deeper meaning to the narrative, turning it into a reflection of the human condition. In today's lecture, we will explore how Golding's novel works as an allegory and how symbolism conveys its central themes.

1. Religious Allegory

Simon as a Christ Figure

Simon is portrayed as a spiritual, compassionate boy, closely connected with nature. His encounter with the pig's head — the "Lord of the Flies" — mirrors a confrontation with evil, like Christ's temptation in the wilderness. His death, mistaken for the beast and carried out by frenzied boys, echoes martyrdom. Golding's choice makes Simon a symbol of innocence sacrificed by humanity's blindness.

The Lord of the Flies

The pig's head, covered in flies, is a grotesque idol symbolizing evil, decay, and the darker side of humanity. Its name translates to Beelzebub, a biblical name for the devil. When Simon confronts it, he realizes that the beast is not external but lives within every human being.

2. Political Allegory

Ralph: Democracy and Order

Ralph represents democratic leadership and collective responsibility. His use of the conch shows the importance of discussion, rules, and cooperation.

Jack: Totalitarianism and Dictatorship

Jack embodies autocratic power, ruling by fear, violence, and ritual. His tribe mirrors the rise of fascism and dictatorships in the 20th century.

Piggy: Rationalism and Science

Piggy's glasses symbolize intellectual clarity and the power of science. His death signifies the collapse of rationalism in the face of violence.

Simon: Spiritual and Ethical Insight

Beyond political categories, Simon represents moral truth, ignored and destroyed by society.

3. Psychological Allegory (Freudian Reading)

Ralph → Ego

Rational self that mediates between instinct and morality.

Jack → Id

Instinctual drives of aggression, dominance, and pleasure.

Piggy → Superego

Rational conscience, appealing to order and reason.

Roger → Sadism

Represents the darkest human impulse: cruelty for its own sake.

This Freudian model highlights that the island is a microcosm of the human psyche. The conflict among the boys dramatizes the conflict inside every individual.

4. Symbols of Civilization and its Collapse

The Conch: Order, democracy, and structured society. Its shattering represents the end of civilized discourse.

Piggy's Glasses: Rational thought and the power of science. When stolen, reason becomes subordinate to violence.

The Signal Fire: Hope of rescue and connection to civilization. Its neglect symbolizes descent into savagery.

The Beast: Fear and projection of inner savagery. Ultimately revealed as the darkness within.

Conclusion

By weaving religious, political, and psychological allegory, Golding makes *Lord of the Flies* more than an adventure tale. The novel becomes a mirror in which readers see the collapse of order, the lure of power, and the evil within human beings. Its symbols are not arbitrary; they embody universal truths about society, morality, and psychology. This is why the novel resonates across cultures and remains central in literary studies.