

HOW TO READ A BOOK 101

I know you know how to read a book. I also know that some of you “hate” to read them! This aversion to reading extended pieces exists for two reasons. **First**, your attention span is different than your parents and grandparents. As your brains have adapted to a technological world, you have learned how to scan rather than read. Nobody “reads” the internet. Instead, you have learned what *not* to read. Regardless of how our brains or attention spans may have adapted, the expectations of the world around you have not. **Secondly**, jumping into a new topic without warming up is difficult. Writing without pre-writing is stressful and leads to incoherent rambling. Reading without first making predictions about the plot and possible themes is just as stressful. Would you run a marathon without stretching?

This exercise will hopefully allow you to ask some questions, make predictions, but most importantly, give your brain a chance to get interested and dive into one of the most disturbing and engaging criticisms of human nature.

TITLE

The title of a book is a tool used by the author to communicate several messages to the reader. Tone and subject can be quickly established as the mind begins to piece together images and phrases from the context of their “reality.” Often, authors use titles to foreshadow elements of plot, character analysis, or themes in the work.

William Golding has selected: **LORD OF THE FLIES**

1. Using the context of your own reality, what three images or phrases does this title bring to your mind?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

2. Look at the word choice. Brainstorm all of the possible contexts/connotations of these words:

a. **LORD:**

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b. **FLIES:**

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3. The phrase “lord of the flies” is the definition of Beelzebub, also known as Satan, the adversary of the Abrahamic God. With this in mind, what predictions can you make about the novel:

COVER ART

The artistic design of each book is a result of a laborious process. Several designs are submitted and edited according to the interpretation of the novel.

Studying the cover art of a book can be as critical to the analysis process as reading the plot summary. Readers can make predictions about plot, conflict, characters, tone, and themes.

Book Cover 1:

What do we see? Include commentary for the front and back.

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Book Cover 2:

What do we see? Include commentary for the front and back.

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Book Cover 3:

What do we see? Include commentary for the front and back.

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What does it all mean? Make predictions about plot, characters, tone, and themes.

BACK COVER COMMENTARY

The back cover of a book is also edited and selected by the publishing company. The information provided may be different, and at times contradictory, in different editions. The criticisms and adjectives utilized in the description of the novel is promotional in nature.

The description of the initial success of the novel is deceiving. In the United States, LOTF only sold 3,000 copies before going out of print. In the early 1960's the book made a come back landing on best sellers lists. Today, the book has been adopted into required reading lists in high schools and universities throughout the country.

What adjectives are used to describe this novel? What predictions can you make about the piece from the analysis provided?

Adjectives:

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Predictions:

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

The publishing information in a book is usually glossed over by readers. However, the data provided can give us insights about historical setting or context, political perspective, and the success of the piece.

In our edition, we are given the following clues:

- We are provided with a notice or warning
- The book was published in 1954
- It was published in New York City
- There are 95 previous versions
- It is catalogued in the Library of Congress

What have we learned about this book from the information provided? Why would looking at the publishing date be significant? What events came before 1954?

AUTHOR

The author of *Lord of the Flies* is William Golding. The back cover of our book gives us little insight about Golding's inspiration for the novel. He is compared to Joseph Conrad. Conrad was a Polish-English author in the early 1900's who wrote about human nature, usually focusing on anti-heroic characters.

When critics describe Golding on the back of our current edition, they use terms like "consummate control of the novel form" and "superb...vision of reality."

The final pages on a novel usually incorporate short notes on the work as well as biographical information about the author. Sometimes definitions of terms or theories are clarified. In these pages, we learn the following facts about Golding:



- Born in Cornwall, England (county, southern tip of England) in 1911
- Changed majors from Science to English at Oxford University
- Lieutenant in Royal Navy during WWII
 1. [D-Day](#)
 2. [Sinking of the Bismarck](#)
- Teacher and writer
- Hobbies: "thinking"

What predictions can you make about the book based on the limited amount of information provided by our text?

CHAPTER TITLES

The titles selected by the author for each chapter give readers insight into plot, tone, and themes. As we read the list of titles in the contents page, we can make predictions about the progression of plot.

Take note of the word choice of each title. Pick three words that stand out to you. Explain why you selected these words and what predictions you can make about the progression of plot.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What predictions can you make about plot, characters, tone, and theme?
