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## The Author

William Golding was a British writer, schoolmaster, lecturer, actor, sailor, and musician. He was born on September 19, 1911, in Cornwall, England. Although he always wanted to be an author (he even tried to write a novel at the age of 12), his parents forced him to study science. Golding followed his parents' wishes and studied Natural Sciences at Oxford. However, after two years he switched to English Literature. After graduating, Golding worked briefly as a theater actor and director, wrote poetry, and then became a schoolteacher. In 1940, a year after England entered World War II, Golding joined the Royal Navy, where he served in command of a rocket-launcher. After the war he returned to teaching, and began to write again. He died in 1993 at the age of 81.

### Why did Golding write *Lord of the Flies*?

*"It was simply what seemed sensible for me to write after the war when everyone was thanking God they weren't Nazis. I'd seen enough to realize that every single one of us could be Nazis."*

- William Golding

# Lord of the Flies by William Golding Background Information & Context

## Golding & World War Two

Golding joined the Royal Navy in 1940 and spent six years afloat, except for seven months in New York and six months helping Lord Cherwell at the Naval Research Establishment. He saw action against battleships (at the sinking of the Bismarck), submarines and aircraft. He finished the war as Lieutenant in command of a rocket ship. He was present off the French coast for the D-Day invasion, and later at the island of Walcheren. After the war, Golding resumed teaching and started to write novels, and published *Lord of the Flies* in 1954.



## The Historical Context

When *Lord of the Flies* was published in the early 1950s Britain was living in the shadow of the horrors of World War Two. Indeed, Golding's experience in the war had a profound effect on his view of humanity and the evils of which it was capable. Golding was revolted by the evil things people did to each other in the war; The Nazi concentration camps, the Japanese treatment of their prisoners, the atomic bombing against civilians - even his own actions as a naval officer. Golding began to see all human nature as savage and unforgiving; he had seen that even the good could be corrupted. After the war the United Nations was set up to try to ensure that such a global conflict never happened again, but by 1954, when *Lord of the Flies* was published, it was the early years of the Cold War and the threat of a Third World War was very real. Many countries had built up arsenals of nuclear weapons with enough atomic energy to destroy civilizations. The fact that the events in *Lord of the Flies* take place against the backdrop of nuclear war is not merely a coincidence.

## Lord of the Flies as an Allegory

In literature, writers often use allegory, to convey their ideas. An allegory is a literary device which conveys meaning through symbols, actions, and even characters. In the *Lord of the Flies*, the setting, the characters, and even some of the symbols serve to convey feelings about leadership, order, civilization, control, and culture. One should bear this in mind when reading the novel, and continually ask the question, **"What deeper comment is Golding making about society and humanity?"**

