The beast

The beast is first mentioned as a 'snake-thing', which some of the younger boys are scared of. 'He wants to know what you're going to do about the snake-thing.' (p. 34)

The older boys such as Ralph and Piggy try to convince the younger ones that there is no such thing as the beast, that it is just their irrational fear: 'Ralph's right of course. There isn't a snake-thing. But if there was a snake we'd hunt it and kill it.' (p. 35)

The fear of a 'beast' continues throughout the novel and it takes on various forms: '...talk of a thing, a dark thing, a beast, some sort of animal.' (p. 89)

The beast is seen as something that comes out of the sea: 'He says the beast comes out of the sea.' (p. 94)

Simon sees the beast for what it really is — them: 'However Simon thought of the beast, there rose before his inward sight the picture of a human at once heroic and sick.' (p. 112)

What Simon sees is the parachutist and not a beast at all. He has to tell the others what he has discovered but never gets a chance to tell them the truth about the beast: '...the creature lifted its head, holding towards them the ruin of a face.' (p. 135)

Jack uses the boys' fear of the beast as a way of getting them to support him as he promises them that they will find and kill it: 'And about the beast. When we kill we'll leave some of the kill for it. Then it won't bother us, maybe.' (p. 147)

The beast becomes the Lord of the Flies and Simon imagines it is talking to him, telling him that the beast is actually the boys themselves: '"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head..."You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?"' (p. 158)

The darkness and fear of looking inside oneself to see the truth is what scares Simon the most: 'Simon found he was looking into a vast mouth. There was blackness within, a blackness that spread.' (p. 159)

The boys see Simon as the beast, as they do not understand him. They destroy him in a frantic, savage manner: '...leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore...no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws.' (p. 169)

Ralph encounters the 'beast' at the end of the novel, when he is fighting for his life. He cannot understand what it is, so he destroys it, showing we destroy things that we do not understand or that do not fit in: '...the skull lay in two pieces, its grin now six feet across.' (p. 206)

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