Lord of the Flies

1 Read the book!
If you haven’t already read the book in class, you should spend a few hours reading the novel for yourself. Whilst reading, highlight your favourite moments, any lines that you particularly like or anything that really stands out. Doing this means that you are interacting critically with the text, which will serve you well when you come to study the text more closely.

2 Good and evil
Good and evil is a central theme in the book. One way of getting to grips with this theme is to make a note of precise moments in the novel that illustrate the collision of good and evil, for example:
- Roger destroying the littluns’ game
- Ralph’s gang versus Jack’s gang: how do they differ?
- Piggy’s death; Simon’s death
- Jack’s gang hunting Ralph

Also think about how the two groups that form represent the battle between good and evil: Jack’s barbaric group versus the democratic and ordered group of Ralph, Piggy, the twins and Simon.

3 Context: know your history!
Think of the context like the backdrop to the novel: without understanding it, the novel will not make complete sense. Make sure you are familiar with:
- a) the Cold War
- b) the aftermath of the Second World War

How do these events seem to have affected William Golding and his pessimism about mankind? Understanding these contexts will help you to understand the theme of Good and evil. Where are there references to the war? What other wars and conflicts take place in the novel as a whole? Does this make the plot’s action symbolic?

4 Quotations
Get some key quotations under your belt for themes, language and characters – sometimes you can find quotations that touch on all three. Check out our Key quotations feature in the Revise section of our Online guide to start you off! Remember: embed your quotations into the points of your essay for a more sophisticated answer.

5 Literary terms
Nothing is more impressive than being able to identify literary techniques used by an author and commenting on how they are effective. Understanding the techniques used by Golding and using the proper terms is a sure way to boost your grade! For example, do you know what foreshadowing is? How about onomatopoeia and symbolism? Does Golding use imagery? Remember: always comment on the effect of Golding’s techniques.

6 Get to know the characters
There are moments where the characters’ actions can alienate the reader. Do you think that the evil in the book is heightened or lessened by the fact that the characters are only children? Does this differ from traditional portrayals of children in literature? Comparing and contrasting the characters, such as Ralph and Jack, will unlock the novel for you, and may even lead you to identify key points about language.

Why not choose a character from the text and write an analysis of how he has been characterised through his actions, speech and opinions. How is your impression of this character created by Golding and how does your response to him change throughout the novel?
Linking key themes with characters/events
Try linking the key themes with characters and events. For example, ask yourself which characters/events could be closely associated with the following themes:
- Crowd mentality
- Order and discipline
- Good and evil
- War and conflict

The more you 'map' your ideas, the more likely you are to remember key points about the text as well as developing your own interpretations.

Language
Considering the language used by the boys is key to commenting on the characterisation and the period of time in which the novel is set. Think about:
- The boys’ language compared with the language used today – what words can you pick out that we no longer use? Does this help to place the novel in a particular moment in time? Is the boys' language colloquial?
- Piggy’s language compared to others – what does this tell us about class and status? How does this clear difference affect Piggy’s position within the group of boys?

Quick check
How much do you really know about the novel? Try to answer these questions – if you don’t know the answers, maybe a bit more revision is needed!
- What is happening in the outside world while the boys are stranded on the island?
- What does the death of the airmen signify?
- What does Ralph think about Jack at the beginning of the novel and how do his feelings change towards Jack?
- Why is Piggy probably the most intelligent boy on the island?
- Why does Jack try to overthrow Ralph as leader?
- What is the significance of the conch?
- Why and how does Piggy’s speech differ from the speech of the other boys?
- What is irony? Give an example of irony in Lord of the Flies.

Further questions
It is important to practise for exams or assessments by writing extended written responses. Here are a few exam-style questions to get you started. For more, see our Progress Booster section in the print and online study guide:
- How does Golding present the relationship between Ralph and Jack?
- How does Golding use imagery in Lord of the Flies to explore ideas about good and evil?
- Explore the importance of the conch in the novel. Think about:
  - how it symbolises law and order and free speech;
  - Ralph’s style of government.
- How does Golding present Simon? Write about:
  - his contribution to the novel;
  - the methods Golding uses to show what Simon is like.
- How does Golding present Jack’s descent into evil? Write about:
  - how Jack is presented at the start of the novel;
  - how he changes and develops as the novel progresses.