

Mapping the Boundaries of Domestic and International Criminal Jurisdiction in William Golding's Lord of the Flies: Integrating Doctrinal Legal Analysis and Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

William Golding's Lord of the Flies is often read as an allegory of failed civilization. Its violence also raises a narrower legal question: what survives of criminal jurisdiction when public power is physically absent? This study combines doctrinal legal analysis with corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the novel's language. The primary corpus is a digital edition of the novel, divided into twelve chapter-documents across three narrative phases and comprising 60,573 raw tokens, reduced to 21,637 content tokens after normalisation, stop-word removal and lemmatization. Frequency, TF-IDF, cosine similarity, discourse salience, and a weighted Composite Chapter Score direct, rather than confirm, a qualitative reading. Coercive-authority language rises from 3.407 markers per 1,000 content tokens in the first phase to 16.411 in the last; tribe moves from zero occurrences to 40, while accountability terms remain lexically marginal throughout. The doctrinal analysis, however, resists a simple transfer from failed local order to international prosecution. Using contemporary England and Wales law as a comparator, homicide committed abroad, attempt, and secondary liability offer plausible domestic routes, subject to proof of nationality, age, conduct and intent. By contrast, the Rome Statute imposes cumulative subject-matter, temporal, territorial, admissibility and gravity constraints, together with Article 26's categorical exclusion of persons under eighteen from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. These apparently conflicting findings take the form of an asymmetrical jurisdictional limit: the absence of institutions increases violence but does not convert an interpersonal crime into an international one, while international human-rights law mainly constrains how any domestic accountability process treats a child.

KEYWORDS: Lord of the Flies; domestic criminal jurisdiction; International Criminal Court; juvenile responsibility; corpus stylistics; critical discourse analysis; law and literature.

1. Introduction

The absence of a cop, a court, or working government does not move conduct outside of the law. What it does is create a situation where enforcement is interrupted but legal claims continue to attach through territory, through nationality, through protective rules, or through later adjudication. It is easy to miss that difference in literary accounts of isolation. Adult authority is swiftly erased on the island in William Golding's Lord of the Flies.

The boys on the island cannot call on a magistrate, cannot designate a sovereign, and cannot advance a claim beyond the beach. In other words, the narrative does not exclude the legal identities which the boys brought with them to the island, the probable sovereignty of the territorial state, and the jurisdiction a competent court may be able to exercise once the rescue becomes a live possibility.

This novel is particularly rich for reflection on the question as, through the unfolding plot, institutions are founded and destroyed. The conch shell, the assembly, the election, speaking turns, shelters, and a signal fire create rudimentary constitutional vocabulary. These are followed by rival leadership, ritualized hunting, punishments, raids, homicide and an attempt to kill Ralph. It is not a shift merely from being ruled to not being ruled. A change occurs from authority based on consent to one based on coercive command, and here we move to the re-entry of an external military representative whose presence ends the emergency by restoring practical custody, not resolving the liability question. The naval officer brings the emergency to a close but leaves unanswered questions about who may conduct the investigation, which offences may be charged, and what legal order may try children for conduct committed on an unidentified island.

Legal and political readings of the novel have concentrated on the nature of law, the state of exception, sovereignty, and the relationship between civilization and violence. Wójcik (2020) uses the novel to consider natural law, legal positivism, morality, and mechanisms of power. Diken and Laustsen (2006) explain the island through security, exception and spite, while Altaç (2020) interprets the text as a portrayal of the establishment of sovereignty through suspension of rule and creation of bare life. These works show how power becomes visible. None makes a systematic distinction between the absence of enforcement and the continued existence of jurisdiction. None subjects the events narrated to the standards of domestic and international criminal law.

International criminal jurisdiction is often used too broadly in the literature for that reason. A violent event is not international merely because it is serious, shocking, geographically remote, or outside the normal reach of a national authority. The ICC may only exercise jurisdiction over the Article 5 crimes of the Rome Statute, and only after fulfilment of additional temporal, territorial or nationality, personal and admissibility criteria. Murder may be a crime against humanity or a war crime, but only as part of the contextual structure required under Articles 7 or 8. An isolated killing is not an international crime because of the temporary absence of local authority.

The warning applies equally to domestic issues. The boys are described as British but the island is not legally located. It is not possible to confidently assign territorial jurisdiction to a named state. Homicide which occurs abroad may be open to a nationality-grounded route, but this will depend on proof that the accused falls within the relevant statutory category and on a legally adequate account of conduct and fault. The ages of individual boys cannot be specified exactly. A child under the age of ten cannot commit a criminal offence under current law in England and Wales. A child aged 10 to 17 may be subject to a distinct youth-justice system. The International Criminal Court may not proceed against a person for making a conduct which took place at a time when that person was under the age of eighteen. Consequently, age creates a line that is more rigid than a common area of prosecution.

Law and literature scholars see narrative as a way of making visible the assumptions that are embedded in legal categories. Legal reasoning can be classified as a linguistic and imaginative activity, according to White (1973). Cover (1983) argued that legal meaning resides in normative worlds supported by stories. Nussbaum (1995) emphasized the value of literary imagination for public judgment. The fiction's facts are left as fiction, not transformed into a case file.

This allows a disciplined hypothetical: if Golding's fictional events were reconstructed as allegations, what jurisdictional questions would arise, and what conclusions would remain

unavailable? The current paper provides a corpus-supported methodology for that hypothetical. Naturally, corpus methods do not obviate close reading, nor is a single novel a representative sample of real-world offences. The present approach is thus useful in a diagnostic sense. By examining frequency and TF-IDF, we can observe where lexical focus shifts. Cosine similarity measures how the three phases of the narrative become more distant from each other. Discourse-category frequencies probe whether coercion and violence become a stronger presence in the narrative. Finally, a weighted influence metric identifies the chapters on which qualitative reading should focus. Before chapter-level frequency data were examined, discourse lexicons were finalised; the computational results therefore direct rather than confirm the qualitative reading. This process reduces the possibility that the legal reading is contingent on memorable instances chosen with the knowledge that the sought inference has already been decided (Stockwell and Mahlberg, 2015; Egbert and Biber, 2019).

Through critical discourse analysis, we can connect institutional meaning with lexical pattern. Fairclough's (1992, 2015) three-dimensional model distinguishes textual choices, discursive practice and broader social practice. At the textual level, the analysis concerns words such as conch, assembly, chief, tribe, spear, and savage. Discourse practice is concerned with who can speak, how meetings are called, how chants circulate and how fear sanctions orders. Social practice concerns the replacement of accountable authority by coercive sovereignty and the eventual reinstatement of imperial and military power. As opposed to just being impressionistic, the corpus-assisted approach makes these levels traceable (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008).

There are three questions in the study. First, how does the novel's language trace the shift from civic ordering to coercive authority? Secondly, under a contemporary and non-retroactive England and Wales comparator, what domestic jurisdictional and liability pathways could apply to the death of Simon, the death of Piggy and the hunt for Ralph? Thirdly, why do the substantive and jurisdictional thresholds of the Rome Statute prevent the International Criminal Court from operating as an alternative forum, and what role remains for international child-rights law?

The present study argues that there is an asymmetry in the apparent clash here. Domestic law provides the primary vocabulary for individual liability, although factual uncertainty about territory, nationality, age, causation and intent remains important. International criminal law provides exclusionary thresholds rather than a competing prosecution. International human-rights law comes back at a different level since it restricts how a state should investigate, try, sentence and reintegrate a child. The result is a boundary map, not a claim that one forum simply displaces another.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Narrative, normativity, and the legal imagination

Law and literature scholarship must resist two recurring temptations that distort the relationship between narrative and legal reasoning. The first treats the novel as if it were a statute written in code whose characters may be convicted by quotation. The second is to confine the legal vocabulary to figuration. A consistent reading will take up the intermediate space. Fiction can create a normative world sufficiently detailed to show how legal categories depend on facts, institutions, and language. However, doctrinal analysis can make distinctions between places

where the facts available would fail evidential or jurisdictional tests and places where they would not.

In this regard, the account of nomos and narrative by Cover (1983) is pertinent because the boys do not go to the island as blank slates. They bring with themselves school hierarchy, electoral habits, parliamentary forms, mental categories of Britishness and adult memories of punishment. Their inherited legal order becomes unstable in this new setting; however, it is not built from nothing.

White (1973) directs attention to language as action in legal imagination. When a meeting is called, when the conch is honoured, when a chief is elected, when a group is called a tribe, and when an enemy is described as a beast, these do not simply report political reality in neutral terms. They also represent one way of producing it.

Nussbaum's (1995) defence of narrative judgment adds an ethical caveat: the legal reader must remain aware of vulnerability, fear, immaturity and inequality of power even as they remain true to the demands of particular, individual proof. Posner (2009) warns us against assuming that literary insight can settle a legal controversy. In a more recent study, Manderson (2012) has demonstrated that ethical proximity or proximity of obligation in a literary context illuminates the conditions for recognition and denial of legal responsibility. This frame suits the shifting acknowledgments of harm and wrongdoing in the novel. Thus, the chapter distinguishes interpretive claims from doctrinal ones and repeatedly identifies missing facts.

2.2 Sovereignty, violence, and empire in *Lord of the Flies*

Criticism thus far has established the island as a laboratory of authority. Diken and Laustsen (2006) challenge the notion that the novel depicts a simple fall from peace into war, emphasizing the continuity between the boys' violence and the adult war beyond the island. Altaç (2020) elaborates this idea with Agamben, interpreting the fact of suspended rule and exposure to violence not as evidence for the waning of sovereignty but as constitutive features of sovereignty itself.

Wójcik (2020) demonstrates, from a jurisprudential perspective, how the law, when divorced from morality, can be appropriated by parties for self-serving purposes. Carey's (2009) biographical study of Golding shows that the author's own experiences of violence, war and institutional cruelty give the novel an ambivalent picture of order, since the collapse of the boys is not merely a philosophical abstraction, but a reflection rooted in Golding's firsthand observation of human capacity for cruelty within civilised institutional contexts.

These narratives highlight the reasons behind Jack's regime not being lawless in the usual sense. It has borders, membership, guards, commands, penalties, food distribution, ritual and a leader. What does not disappear is organization; what does disappear are the public standards on which commands may be challenged. Ralph's assembly is vulnerable as it relies on persuasion and recognition. Jack's command takes shape as it reorganizes fear, meat, spectacle, and force. The replacement of the conch with the spear symbolizes a shift in the medium of authority, not a failure of authority in itself.

A postcolonial reading brings something into sovereignty literature that it undervalues. Their institutional dispositions, assembly, election, prefect-style leadership, are evident in the boys who are British public schoolboys.

Gilmour (2015) notes that Golding's fiction has a constant reference to the entropy of Englishness as empire declined. On the other hand, Whittle (2017) places *Lord of the Flies* in a corpus of post-war British writing that worked through imperial decline rather than just recorded it. The last scene presents the naval officer in uniform, embarrassed and unable to understand what he sees. He reinstates the possibility of the law; at the same time, he represents an imperial authority that cannot carry its judgment through. This layer of meaning does not affect the determination of jurisdiction, but it does help explain why the novel has continued to resist legal closure. There is the machinery of colonial governance, as it were, on the rescue beach, but that machinery cannot make sense of the event in its absence.

This study accepts the political insights of the sovereignty literature but asks a different legal question. In this paper's terms, *de facto* control on the island does not in itself confer criminal jurisdiction, and the failure of Ralph's assemblies does not extinguish the jurisdiction of any state able to act afterwards. Becoming a coercive group does not itself necessarily satisfy the Rome Statute concept of an organization pursuing an attack against a civilian population.

Political interpretation might find the presence of sovereignty where legal doctrine does not find a state nor an international crime.

2.3 Jurisdiction, criminal responsibility, and childhood

Jurisdiction must be distinguished from applicable law, admissibility and liability. Jurisdiction refers to the power of a legal system or court to prescribe, adjudicate or enforce. Most domestic systems operate on the basis of territoriality, but may extend jurisdiction based on nationality or other extraterritorial statutes (Ryngaert, 2015). Later inquiry into the *actus reus*, *mens rea*, causation, defences, and participation of an accused concerns liability. It is possible for a case to be within the jurisdiction of the court even if the evidence reveals no offence. On the other hand, even if no competent forum or lawful charge is available, conduct may remain morally blameworthy.

The Rome Statute adds further layers. The jurisdictional structure of the Statute has been explored authoritatively by Cryer et al. (2019) and Schabas (2020), and the analysis that follows draws on both. Under Article 5, the Court has subject-matter jurisdiction limited to four crimes. Temporal jurisdiction is regulated by Article 11, and territorial or nationality jurisdiction by Article 12. The Court is complementary to national jurisdictions under Article 17. Finally, admissibility and gravity further filter the cases that reach the Court.

Article 26 of the Rome Statute excludes from the jurisdiction of the Court any person who was under the age of eighteen at the time of the alleged commission of a crime. No amount of complementarity can bring ordinary homicide within the subject-matter jurisdiction of the Court; no amount of state failure will override the age exclusion.

Quenivet (2017) characterizes Article 26 as a careful institutional choice, not an oversight. The ICC was not seen as the appropriate place for dealing with child accountability, not because the harm caused by children was insignificant. These issues were instead left to national systems and

international human-rights supervision. The ICC serves as a court of last resort for adult perpetrators of mass atrocity.

Podcameni (2017) discusses the Special Court for Sierra Leone as the only international tribunal to set a minimum age of criminal responsibility, at fifteen years under Article 7 of its Statute. That experience demonstrated why there is no international consensus on the prosecution of children.

Childhood does not eliminate the domestic inquiry; it changes the applicable legal framework. According to Section 50 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, no child under the age of ten shall be guilty of an offence. Historically, a rebuttable presumption of *doli incapax* also applied to children aged ten to thirteen, requiring the prosecution to prove that the child understood the conduct was seriously wrong rather than merely mischievous. Section 34 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 abolished that presumption.

Contemporary prosecution policy necessitates consideration of age, maturity, welfare, diversion and the public interest. Article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for dignity, legality, fair process, privacy, proportionality and reintegration. These standards regulate national child justice. They do not establish an international criminal court for children.

2.4 Corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis

Baker (2006) offers important methodological tools for the corpus-assisted discourse analysis of texts, allowing for systematic testing of discourse claims instead of intuitive judgments by quantitatively locating patterns. McEnery and Hardie (2012) provide a systematic account of the methodological toolkit from frequency and collocation to keyness and concordance, and their discussion of corpus design and sampling underpinned the decisions we describe in Section 3. That general approach was applied to critical purposes in Baker et al. (2008), who demonstrate that corpus methods can lead analysts to representative textual environments, whereas critical analysis explains the social work those patterns perform. In literary texts, Leech and Short (2007) show that stylistic analysis of prose needs to identify linguistic choices that are meaningful for representation and ideology, choices which frequency analysis and concordance can help identify in bulk rather than through selective quotation alone.

Corpus stylistics consists of systematic linguistic observation and the interpretation of literary form (Semino and Short, 2004; Mahlberg, 2013). Stockwell and Mahlberg (2015) demonstrate the applicability of corpus methods to research questions that belong to cognitive poetics. In their framework, the mechanisms of characterization work via textual patterns, as opposed to memorable isolated scenes.

Eve (2019) proposes that computational methods can also be applied to a single novel. By doing so, they can work as a microscope for close reading, not just a telescope for literary history. The present study similarly works at a single-novel scale and uses computational measures diagnostically within one text rather than claiming the population-level literary-historical conclusions associated with macroanalysis (Jockers, 2013).

One methodological concern that runs through much of the literature is the need to choose a distinctiveness measure. Standard TF-IDF captures terms that are relatively frequent but also concentrated in certain documents. By contrast, the Egbert and Biber (2019) dispersion-keyness

measure incorporates text-level dispersion. Gries (2008) shows that frequency-only measures can lead one astray when a term is unevenly distributed across texts. The current study's Category Influence Index weights category salience by inverse document frequency. The corpus only comprises twelve documents. Further, the goal is to find chapters where authority-relevant terms are dense and distinctive, not just frequent. The index is not being promoted as better than log-likelihood or dispersion keyness in general. Rather, its value is specific to the chapter-level diagnostic purpose here.

There is a limitation central to the present design. The frequency of *conch* rises in the middle phase because the authority associated with it is repeatedly debated. It is subsequently represented in the scene of its destruction. A high count thus shows discursive pressure, not institutional strength. Likewise, assembly becomes relevant precisely when assemblies become incapable of resolving disagreement. The computational tools clarify where authority is being talked into, and out of, existence. Social efficacy and lexical presence are then distinguished by Fairclough's model.

2.5 Research gap and analytical propositions

There are three connected gaps in the literature. To begin with, the literature reviewed for this study did not identify a prior work on *Lord of the Flies* that combines a reproducible chapter-level corpus analysis with a systematic jurisdictional analysis. In the second place, political readings of exception and sovereignty do not make a distinction between domestic extraterritorial jurisdiction, ICC jurisdiction, and international child-rights norms. Third, readings in law have not employed quantitative evidence to test the way the novel's discourse of rule varies across the narrative. This analysis advances three analytical propositions rather than predictive hypotheses. The difference is important because none of these propositions is formulated so that a single counter-example can falsify them; the study is exploratory and interpretive. What might warrant revision is evidence that the coercive markers do not increase, that the ICC thresholds do apply on an alternative reading of the facts, or that group-level discourse analysis can replace actor-specific liability proof. As we move from assembly to tribe, the claim is that coercive and violent markers will rise, while accountability terms will remain comparatively sparse. It is further proposed that domestic liability will entail event-specific and actor-specific analysis, especially with regard to group violence. The analysis undertaken by the ICC will be driven primarily by threshold exclusions, including Article 26, rather than competition between equally available forums.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study uses a cross-disciplinary mixed analytical design. The digital text of the novel is the subject of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis. Another component uses doctrinal legal analysis, with the contemporary law of England and Wales as a clearly stated comparator and the Rome Statute as the international criminal framework. Integration of the two components occurs after their separate results are reported. The findings of the corpus identify narrative shifts; doctrine then determines whether those shifts have legal significance. By positioning these elements in this order, we reduce the chances that the legal categories being applied affect which textual patterns we notice in the first instance. The design is descriptive and interpretative, not inferential. It is impossible to rely on just one novel to support population-level generalization. The three narrative phases are analytically constructed rather than randomly sampled. All numerical measures are

reported as transparent properties of the text provided, not as statistical evidence about Golding's intention or about real children.

3.2 Data collection and corpus construction

A digital edition of the novel served as the primary corpus, extracted from a 251-page digital text file in which the text layer is complete and allows direct extraction. The file's properties identify William Golding and the twelve canonical chapter titles but do not provide a reliable publication, edition, ISBN or pagination statement. This absence of formal edition metadata is a limitation of the corpus, addressed further in Section 6; the source file is retained by the author, and a digital fingerprint of the extracted text can be supplied to editors or reviewers on request to support verification. Chapters are used as references for scenes. The bibliography cites the original work of 1954.

We consider the chapter as the basic unit of analysis. Front matter, contents pages, the title page, dedication, and the generated end table of contents were excluded. Chapter headings were also omitted from the analysable text so that title words would not inflate the counts. The resulting corpus contains twelve documents.

For the purposes of temporal ordering, Chapters 1 to 4 are regarded as the constitutional-ordering phase; Chapters 5 to 8 as the contested-authority phase; and Chapters 9 to 12 as the coercive-sovereignty phase. The phase boundaries have clear narrative justification. The final part of Chapter 4 depicts the hunters allowing the fire to go out, failing their collective obligation and directly precipitating Jack's challenge to authority. Chapter 5 opens with Ralph's deliberate, agenda-driven assembly, the moment that the logic of civic procedure is stated most fully and simultaneously fails to bind most visibly. Chapter 8 concludes with Jack's departure from the assembly, the formation of his tribe, and the ritual killing of the sow, closing the period of competition and beginning one of established coercive command. Chapters 9 to 12 move through Simon's death, the Piggy episode, and the organized hunt for Ralph with no surviving institutional counterweight to Jack's authority. The partitioning is justified by these narrative landmarks, not equal chapter-count alone.

Table 1. Corpus structure by narrative phase.

Unit	Description	Docs	Segments	Analytical inclusion
Primary corpus	Narrative body	12	One per chapter	Front matter excluded
Phase 1	Constitutional ordering	4	Chs. 1–4	Election, assembly, conch, shelters, signal fire
Phase 2	Contested authority	4	Chs. 5–8	Fear, rival leadership, defection, ritual violence
Phase 3	Coercive sovereignty	4	Chs. 9–12	Homicide, punishment, raid, organized pursuit

Table 2. Token and vocabulary count by narrative phase.

Corpus unit	Docs	Raw tokens	Content tokens	Vocabulary
Constitutional ordering (Chs. 1–4)	4	21,720	7,925	2,683
Contested authority (Chs. 5–8)	4	20,944	7,192	2,485
Coercive sovereignty (Chs. 9–12)	4	17,909	6,520	2,282
Full corpus	12	60,573	21,637	4,649

3.3 Computational linguistic analysis

Preprocessing was performed in a reproducible Python script. Soft hyphens were removed, and hyphenation related to line breaks was repaired for better arrangement of words. Curly apostrophes were normalized. Tokens were identified using an alphabetic regular expression that maintained internal apostrophes. Tokens were converted to lower case for case-insensitive matching.

The English stop-word set provided by scikit-learn was extended with dialogue fillers, contractions, high-frequency reporting verbs, and the names of characters. A transparent light lemmatizer was used. The explicit irregular dictionary contains legally or narratively relevant forms such as killed, hunting, rules, assemblies, spears, tribes, and chiefs. Aggressive stemming was avoided since it can generate opaque forms and collapse interpretively distinct words.

Lexicon construction and pre-analysis protocol. Four lexicons for discourse analysis were used: rule and civic order, coercive authority, violence and hunting, and accountability and restraint. They were specified and finalized before the chapter-level frequency counts were examined. The full lexicons, their individual terms, lemmatized forms, and inclusion criteria are provided in Supplementary Data Appendix Section S1.

The lexicons were constructed from two sources. The first was prior reading of the critical literature on the novel to identify relevant semantic fields. The second was a pilot concordance involving fifteen high-frequency non-stop words from the raw token list. This pilot was used only to confirm that the vocabulary supported the category definitions, rather than to select terms according to the chapters in which they were most frequent. The procedure cannot establish complete independence from prior knowledge of the plot, but it makes the categorization explicit and auditable before the principal results were available. Researchers can use the frequency tables in Supplementary Section S2.2 to replicate or challenge the categorization with alternative term sets.

Term frequency-inverse document frequency was calculated over the twelve chapter-documents, using the full retained corpus vocabulary of 4,649 types as the common vector space for all chapter- and phase-level comparisons. Relative term frequency was used to keep longer chapters from dominating the ranking. For term t in chapter d , with N chapters and document frequency

$DF(t)$:

$$TFIDF(t,d) = TF(t,d) \times \ln(N / DF(t))$$

(1)

The four chapter vectors within each narrative phase were aggregated by summation into a single phase-level vector. Similarity between phase vectors A and B was calculated as:

$$\text{CosSim}(A,B) = (A \cdot B) / (\|A\| \|B\|)$$

(2)

In document d_i , term t_j within a category containing m markers was therefore assigned discourse salience as:

$$\text{DS}(t_j, d_i) = f(t_j, d_i) / \sum_{k=1}^m f(t_k, d_i)$$

(3)

Each term was assigned a normalized inverse-document-frequency weight w_j . The category-level influence measure termed here the Category Influence Index (CII), to distinguish it from the chapter-level score defined below :

$$\text{CII}_c(d_i) = \sum_{j=1}^m w_j \times \text{DS}(t_j, d_i)$$

(4)

Because Equation 3 expresses relative composition rather than absolute density, category occurrences per 1,000 retained content tokens (the category rate, rate_c) are also provided. Chapter-level results are reported as a separate Composite Chapter Score (CCS), distinct from the Category Influence Index defined in Equation 4, computed by multiplying each category's rate by that category's Influence Index and summing across the four discourse categories:

$$\text{CCS}(d_i) = \sum_{c=1}^4 \text{rate}_c(d_i) \times \text{CII}_c(d_i)$$

(5)

This Composite Chapter Score not the Category Influence Index alone is the chapter-level measure reported in Section 4.4 and used to rank chapters for close reading (Egbert and Biber, 2019; Gries, 2008). It privileges chapters in which discourse markers are both dense and distinctive.

Robustness analysis. The chapter ranking's sensitivity to lexicon composition was tested by recomputing Composite Chapter Scores under three specifications: the original lexicons; reduced lexicons with the three highest-frequency terms per category removed, frequency ranked over the full twelve-chapter corpus with ties broken alphabetically; and conservative lexicons containing only the most unambiguous core terms in each category. The specific terms removed under each specification are listed by category in Supplementary Data Appendix Section S3. The conservative lexicons contained 10, 8, 8, and 5 terms respectively, compared with 21, 16, 20, and 12 in the original lexicons.

The relative ordering remained completely stable across all three specifications:

Chapter 11 > Chapter 5 > Chapter 12 > Chapter 8 > Chapter 9 > Chapter 10 > Chapter 7 > Chapter 6 > Chapter 4 > Chapter 2 > Chapter 1 > Chapter 3.

Composite Chapter Scores drop as the lexicon shrinks because smaller lexicons produce lower raw marker densities, but the relative ordering is unaffected. Full robustness results appear in Supplementary Section S3. Chapters 5, 9, 11, and 12 were selected for close reading through a hybrid procedure: computational ranking combined with legally decisive events. The top three chapters remain stable under every specification, while Chapter 9 consistently ranks fifth and immediately next to the principal cluster; it was included in the close-reading set because it contains the first completed homicide, a legally decisive event, and not on computational rank alone.

No reference corpus was available for comparison using log-likelihood or dispersion keyness, which limits the measure's capacity to distinguish genre-specific from novel-specific patterns. This limitation is acknowledged in Section 6.

3.4 Doctrinal legal analysis

The doctrinal component uses a staged issue-rule-application-limit protocol. The first stage identifies a possible jurisdictional nexus, including unknown territory, inferred British nationality, or Rome Statute preconditions. The second identifies the legal characterization of the conduct. The third examines personal capacity, mens rea, causation, defences, and participation. The final stage identifies the evidential facts that are missing from the novel.

England and Wales is used as a hypothetical domestic comparator because the boys are described as British and the narrative repeatedly invokes English institutions. This does not mean that the island is claimed to belong to the United Kingdom or that the precise nationality of every character has been proven. Contemporary law is used to map the questions that a present-day forum would face. Using a different domestic comparator might generate different jurisdictional paths; accordingly, the suggestion is made that the comparator be the subject of future work. One of the candidates for those future studies is a plausible territorial-state comparator. If a historical rule would make a material difference to the analysis, then that temporal limitation is identified.

To that end, the analysis applies the Rome Statute cumulatively in the order set out in Section 2.3, that is, subject-matter jurisdiction under Articles 5 to 8; temporal jurisdiction under Article 11; territorial or nationality preconditions under Article 12; admissibility and gravity under Article 17; individual responsibility under Article 25; and age under Article 26. The order is chosen to prevent complementarity under Article 17 from being treated as an independent basis of jurisdiction. While the CRC regulates how a State must treat a child, it does not confer criminal jurisdiction on the ICC. Therefore, it is analysed separately from the Rome Statute.

3.5 Critical discourse analysis and qualitative selection

According to Fairclough's three dimensions, the qualitative reading is based on text, discursive practice and social practice. At a textual vantage point, it involves vocabulary, modality, pronouns, imperatives, naming, and recurrent symbols. Discursive practice involves authorization, repeated usage, silencing and conversion into collective action. Social practice considers consent, coercion, childhood, colonial identity, military rescue, and legal accountability.

The computational results guide the selection rather than functioning as an automated selection rule. The chapters with high Composite Chapter Scores were read alongside legally decisive events. Chapter five ranks second overall; Chapter eleven ranks first; Chapter twelve ranks third;

Chapter nine ranks fifth, but it is included because it contains the first completed homicide. Upon identification of these chapters, the concordance lines for selected high-salience terms were scrutinised prior to the qualitative interpretation being written so the reading stays accountable to representative instances and not only the most dramatic ones.

3.6 Reliability, ethics, and data management

Reliability was supported by explicit segmentation rules, published formulas, fixed lexicons, chapter-level output and preservation of machine-readable results. The counts were checked against the extracted text. The figures were created directly from stored output and not handwritten.

Negative tests supported interpretive validity. For instance, an increase in *conch* was not interpreted as evidence of stronger lawful authority. Analysis of concordance contexts revealed that the term often appears in the context of contestation and destruction.

There were no human subjects, personal information, interviews, or confidential case materials. Because the source text is copyrighted, the article reports only counts, short phrases necessary for criticism, and scene-level paraphrase. The complete extracted novel is not redistributed.

The source file, the Python preprocessing script, derived aggregate tables, lexicons and robustness results are retained by the author for editorial verification, subject to copyright restrictions on the underlying novel text. As stated in the Supplementary Data Appendix, the full lexicons and chapter-level data have been provided.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Corpus statistical profile

Golding assigns more space to the first gathering and last pursuit than to events in between, making the corpus uneven by chapter. Chapter 1 has 7,897 raw tokens, Chapter 12 has 6,614, while Chapter 3 has just 3,136. The overall totals for each phase continuously drop, from 21,720 raw tokens in Chapters 1 to 4 to 17,909 in Chapters 9 to 12. Consequently, phase comparison is consistently by rates and not counts.

Content vocabulary also narrows. The first phase contains 2,683 types, while the second and third phases contain 2,485 and 2,282 types, respectively. This narrowing tracks the declining raw token counts reported above rather than indicating reduced cognitive or narrative complexity in the later chapters.

Table 3. Twenty most frequent content terms in the full corpus.

Rank	Term	Frequency	Per 1,000
1	conch	180	8.32
2	away	165	7.63
3	rock	161	7.44
4	hand	136	6.29
5	water	120	5.55

Rank	Term	Frequency	Per 1,000
6	face	112	5.18
7	turned	107	4.95
8	mountain	106	4.90
9	stood	101	4.67
10	forest	100	4.62
11	eye	99	4.58
12	speak	98	4.53
13	beast	98	4.53
14	smoke	97	4.48
15	head	95	4.39
16	round	93	4.30
17	spear	93	4.30
18	tree	92	4.25
19	voice	89	4.11
20	pig	87	4.02

Note: Character names, English stop words, reporting verbs, and dialogue fillers were excluded from thematic ranking. The Per 1,000 column expresses frequency per 1,000 of the corpus's 21,637 retained content tokens.

A story set in an island setting is likely to make use of terms like rock, water, mountain, forest and other elements of the natural setting. They are important relationally. Initially, rock signifies elevation. Then it comes to indicate boundary and fortification. Finally, it comes to signify the instrument that kills Piggy. Smoke initially functions as a rescue signal, but the smoke at the end is the result of trying to flush Ralph out of hiding. The same material vocabulary changes legal and political function as events unfold in the story.

4.2 TF-IDF and phase similarity

Chapter-document-concentrated words have a substantially higher TF-IDF than novel-wide words. The stage of constitutional ordering is marked by snake, beastie and choir: institutional creation takes place in tandem with fear and inherited hierarchy. Ghost, beast, sow, frightened, fly, and fear are suggestive of the contested-authority phase. The most powerful term in the coercive-sovereignty phase is tribe; next are thicket, officer, savage, ululation, spear, thief, paint, and tie. Hence, the late vocabulary groups together group identity, concealment, command, weaponry, punishment, and external intervention.

Table 4. Ten highest-TF-IDF terms by narrative phase, reported as means of chapter-level relative-frequency TF-IDF values.

Constitutional ordering Chs. 1–4	Contested authority Chs. 5–8	Coercive sovereignty Chs. 9–12
snake (0.003400)	ghost (0.003817)	tribe (0.005566)
beastie (0.002322)	beast (0.002994)	thicket (0.004753)
choir (0.002255)	sow (0.002546)	officer (0.003576)
trail (0.001932)	frightened (0.002152)	savage (0.003284)
candle (0.001673)	fly (0.002134)	ululation (0.002810)
stared (0.001472)	animal (0.001835)	bus (0.002425)
fair (0.001417)	fear (0.001738)	spear (0.002156)
flower (0.001385)	asleep (0.001707)	thief (0.002129)
older (0.001361)	huh (0.001663)	paint (0.002012)
shade (0.001313)	lord (0.001655)	tie (0.001966)

Note: Scores are means of relative-frequency TF-IDF values across the four chapters in each phase.

Pairwise cosine similarities are low. Constitutional ordering and contested authority score 0.2775. Contested authority and coercive sovereignty score 0.2741. Constitutional ordering and coercive sovereignty score 0.2305. The first and final phases therefore have the lowest value, supporting substantial changes in lexical structure. The comparable middle-to-early and middle-to-late values position Chapters 5 to 8 as a transition rather than a continuation of either endpoint.

Cosine distance by itself does not identify moral direction. That comes from the terms loading the phase vectors and the environments in which they take shape. The late distinctiveness of tribe, savage, spear and tie indicates coercive organization. Officer and bus complicate matters by alluding to the adult sphere: bus evokes Ralph's imagined return to an ordinary, safe civilian world, while officer marks a military figure already caught up in the wider war beyond the island.

4.3 Discourse categories and lexical transition

The density of rule and civic-order markers rises from 21.703 per 1,000 content tokens in Phase 1 to 34.761 before dropping to 23.926. The mid-phase zenith is not a chronicle of legality's victory; it is a record of pressure on assembly, conch, chiefship, a rescue project and right to speak. Just when the authority of rule stands most questioned, it is verbalized.

The index for coercive-authority markers increases gradually from 3.407 to 4.588 before increasing to 16.411 in Phase 3, or 4.82 times the Phase 1 rate. The number of markers for violence and hunting more than doubled between Phase 1 and Phase 2, from 17.792 to 37.820. In Phase 3, these remain high at 36.656. Accountability-and-restraint markers remain rare throughout, at 1.640, 2.225, and 1.840 respectively.

Specific terms make the institutional substitution concrete. Assembly is observed 10 times at the initial stage, 41 times in the intervening stage, and 10 times at the final stage. Conch follows the 59, 80, 41 pattern. Chief, at 12, 22, and 43, and tribe, at 0, 1, and 40, both rise. Spear rises from 9 to 31 to 53. Similarly, savage climbs from 5 to 7 and then 47. The arrangement substitutes personal command and group identity for a contestable process; it is not the absence of governance vocabulary.

The scarce vocabulary of accountability is equally important. Guilt and justice are not present in the normalised corpus. Mercy appears once in the initial stage, does not feature at all in the middle stage, and appears once more in the final stage. Shame declines from three occurrences to two and then one. Ralph tries to say what has happened after Simon's death, whereas Piggy's language moves toward accident and self-protection. The community can organize violence more readily than it can publicly attribute responsibility for it.

4.4 Critical discourse analysis of pivotal episodes

Chapter 5 (Beast from Water). Chapter 5 ranks second overall in Composite Chapter Score. At the textual level, rule and civic-order markers reach 71.173 per 1,000 content tokens. Ralph constantly references the agenda, shelters, water, fire, rules and rescue. At the level of discursive practice, the meeting ceases to control turn-taking or settle factual claims. Fear provides Jack with a competing basis of authority. The democratic form continues to exist, although its capacity to bind action deteriorates. The chapter shows that lexical prominence must not be equated with legal effectiveness.

Chapter 8. Jack's group organizes meat distribution, paints faces, sets up hunting, recognizes commands, and creates an insider-outsider boundary. Referring to the collective as a tribe alters allegiance into political identity. The chant condenses individual speech into a rhythmic collective utterance, while the paint minimizes the social cost of visible responsibility. Who may act and who can subsequently deny agency is organized via pronouns, imperatives, and repeated formulas.

Chapter 9 (Simon's death). Simon's death is the first completed human killing. The storm, dance, chant, fear and movement combine to create a scene in which individual actions are hard to isolate. Inspection of beat, kill and struck across Chapters 9 to 12 shows that verbs of completed violence cluster in Chapter 9. Furthermore, they are not anchored to named individuals as grammatical subjects. The subjects of these violent clauses are typically collective nouns such as the crowd or the ring, or are unspecified. That grammatical evasion is evidential, not exculpatory. Proof of the conduct, intention, beliefs and contributions of all participants would be required by criminal law. The chapter is identified within the violence cluster, but corpus density does not identify who lands the fatal blow.

Chapter 11 (Castle Rock). Chapter 11 has the greatest Composite Chapter Score, 20.0836. Per 1,000 content tokens, there are 43.866 rule markers, 33.585 coercion markers, and 37.697 violence markers. Ralph arrives with the conch and a claim to procedure. Jack responds with command and force. Roger releases the rock that ends Piggy's life, and the conch is destroyed at the same moment. The death of a speaker removes that speaker, while the destruction takes away the group's recognized procedure for speech. These are not just balanced symbolic events. The individual and the institution are terminated by the same movement.

In Chapter 12, the tribe positions guards, searches the territory, uses spears, and sets the forest on fire to flush Ralph from hiding. The chapter's discourse markers contain 41.941 violence-and-hunting occurrences per 1,000 content tokens. The sharpened stick, the earlier use of a pig's head as display, and the orders conveyed through Sam and Eric support an inference of lethal intent. The arrival of the naval officer foils the attempt. His questions reinstate an extrinsic language of classification concerning death, bodies, command and national identity. His embarrassment at the boys' grief, however, prevents the scene from becoming a legal inquiry.

Table 5. Domestic and international legal characterizations by pivotal episode, with the corpus metric directing selection for close reading.

Episode	Domestic characterization	International limit	Corpus metric directing selection
Ch. 5: assembly	Procedural authority is invoked but cannot bind dissent; no criminal offence follows from political disagreement alone.	No contextual element is established.	Second-highest Composite Chapter Score overall; highest rule-and-civic-order rate outside Phase 1.
Ch. 9: Simon	Murder or unlawful-act manslaughter depends on each actor's conduct, intent, belief, and causation; loss of control requires an individualized qualifying trigger under s.55 CJA 2009, not established by generalized fear alone.	No widespread or systematic attack; no armed-conflict nexus; all actors are children.	Highest violence-and-hunting density in Phase 3 opening; subject evasion in violent-verb concordance. Ranked 5th overall, upper half.
Ch. 11: Piggy	Roger: <i>Woollin</i> virtual-certainty direction available; others require intended assistance or encouragement under post- <i>Jogee</i> standards.	An isolated homicide remains below Article 7 and Article 8 thresholds.	Highest Composite Chapter Score in corpus (20.0836); three-category collision visible in rates.
Ch. 12: Ralph	Organized pursuit may constitute attempted murder where specific intent to kill is proved; roles differentiated across principal and secondary liability.	No protracted armed conflict; Article 26 independently excludes ICC jurisdiction.	Third-highest Composite Chapter Score; tribe, guards, spear, fire, and hunt translate command into coordinated lethal action.

4.5 Domestic jurisdiction and responsibility

4.5.1 *Territorial uncertainty, nationality jurisdiction, and alternative scenarios*

The island's territorial status. The island does not have a legally recognized location, and the text does not determine its territorial sovereign; three scenarios require explicit treatment. First, the island may lie within a named sovereign state most plausibly a colonial or newly post-colonial power whose domestic law would then govern primary territorial jurisdiction; the novel portrays the island as uninhabited before the boys arrive, with no flag, registered name, official documentation, or treaty reference supplying any particular attribution, and the only outside visitor, the naval officer, arrives as a rescuer rather than as a representative of the island's sovereign. Second, the island could be a British Overseas Territory or otherwise connected to UK sovereign jurisdiction: a naval officer in uniform and the boys' Britishness are consistent with this, but neither establishes territorial sovereignty, since naval officers represent the flag state of their ship rather than the territorial state of wherever they land, so the British connection supports a nationality-based rather than a firm territorial reading. Third, the island cannot properly be classed as high seas, since the high-seas regime under international law concerns maritime areas rather than land; the narrative simply does not identify the island's territorial sovereignty. Territorial jurisdiction therefore cannot be assigned with certainty, but it remains a live possibility rather than an excluded one.

The flag-state doctrine, which grants a state jurisdiction over conduct aboard its flagged vessel, is inapposite here: the boys arrived by aircraft rather than by ship, the island itself is land rather than a vessel, and even a UK-flagged aircraft as their point of embarkation would not extend flag-state jurisdiction to land where the aircraft is no longer present. Were the island identifiable as a British Overseas Territory, BOT law with its own criminal-law provisions and extraterritoriality issues might be a more contextually plausible comparator than domestic England and Wales law; nothing on the face of the text supports that identification, however, so England and Wales law is used as the benchmark instead, on the strength of the boys' nationality and their repeated invocation of English institutions.

Nationality jurisdiction. The British identity of the boys presents a possible personal link. Section 9 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 provides a pathway for murder or manslaughter committed overseas by a British subject, with modifications made by subsequent legislation. There have been numerous changes to the framework. The Murder (Abolition of Death Penalty) Act 1965 amended the penalty attached to extraterritorial murder convictions. The Criminal Justice Act 1948 extended jurisdiction over certain offences committed overseas by British subjects, mainly in contexts involving British-administered territories and the criminal justice infrastructure of the Empire-era Commonwealth. Its direct application to an unidentified island in a post-war setting is limited and would require careful statutory interpretation.

Under the Serious Crime Act 2015, there is extraterritorial jurisdiction for certain serious offences. Those provisions, however, are offence-specific. Their major objective is organised crime, child sexual exploitation and some preparatory offences. They do not straightforwardly extend the general extraterritorial homicide framework beyond the OAPA 1861 and common law. The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 amends the domestic homicide framework through the partial defences of loss of control and diminished responsibility. These defences come into effect once jurisdiction is established. A contemporary prosecution for extraterritorial murder by a British

subject would rely primarily on the OAPA 1861 as amended. Nonetheless, prosecutors and courts must deal with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 in any partial-defence analysis and consider whether any specific provisions in the 2015 Act are engaged.

This does not mean that enforcement is impossible; it is delayed. No recognised authority can conduct an investigation, gather and preserve evidence, separate suspects, and protect witnesses prior to rescue. After rescue, a state with jurisdiction may act, but the evidential record would be quite weak. The sea has taken Simon and Piggy's bodies. The island is on fire. The main witnesses include children who participated, observed, or were threatened by the events.

4.5.2 Age and capacity

The novel does not specify the ages of all the boys. The biguns are presented as older than the littluns, and the group consists of schoolchildren. Under the current law of England and Wales, an individual under the age of ten cannot be found guilty of a criminal offence. A child aged ten to seventeen is above the minimum age, but the case is governed by child-specific procedure and sentencing.

Section 34 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 abolished the former presumption of *doli incapax* for children aged ten to thirteen. Therefore, a boy cannot be assigned liability merely from the label boy. Individual proof of age is required for Roger, Jack, Ralph, Sam, Eric, and each alleged participant. Above the age of ten, immaturity is still relevant to *mens rea*, reliability of admissions, prosecutorial discretion, mode of trial, sentence, and welfare. A child convicted of murder committed while under eighteen is subject to a child-specific form of detention rather than the mandatory adult minimum.

4.5.3 Simon's death

The law is uncertain on the matter of Simon's death. The narrative establishes that Simon was unlawfully killed, but it does not allocate the fatal act, causation, or individual participation to particular actors with sufficient precision.

In order to establish murder, it must be proved that the accused did an unlawful act which caused the death of the deceased. Furthermore, this must also be done with evidence that sheds light on the fact that the act was done with "malice aforethought", that is, with the intent to kill or cause really serious injury. Within the episode where the choir, or hunters as they later become, believe Simon to be the beast, this raises a factual question in relation to perception and intent. If a person honestly believed that the object of force was not a human being, the necessary intention could be negated. This does not mean, however, that this belief cannot be unreasonable or disbelieved. Finally, the genuineness and reasonableness of that belief would have to be judged from the evidence together with all other evidence.

It is also necessary to consider whether the partial defence of loss of control under sections 54 to 56 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 is available to individual participants. Section 55 defines a qualifying trigger narrowly: either the defendant's fear of serious violence from Simon against the defendant or another identified person, or things said or done that constituted circumstances of an extremely grave character and caused the defendant a justifiable sense of being seriously wronged. General fear, darkness, and the collective movement of the group do not, without more,

satisfy either limb. On the facts as narrated, a participant's belief that Simon was "the beast" could support an argument that that individual feared serious violence from what was perceived as an immediate physical threat, but this would have to be established for each accused rather than assumed for the group as a whole; the facts currently available in the narrative are not, without further individualized evidence of each participant's perception and reaction, sufficient to establish a qualifying trigger. Where a qualifying trigger cannot be established for a given accused, the defence is unavailable to that person, and liability turns instead on the ordinary elements of murder discussed above; where a qualifying trigger can be shown on individualized evidence, the defence, if the jury also finds that a person of the accused's age and sex with a normal degree of tolerance and self-restraint might have reacted similarly, reduces liability from murder to manslaughter rather than operating as a complete acquittal.

Unlawful-act manslaughter may also be a valid alternative where the participant intended to join the dangerous assault but did not intend to kill or cause serious injury.

The later conversation between Ralph and Piggy contains acknowledgment, denial and self-protective reframing. It amounts to relevant evidence, but not a substitute for proof beyond reasonable doubt.

Group presence cannot automatically establish shared guilt. After *R v Jogee* [2016] UKSC 8, an accused cannot be secondarily liable unless they intentionally assisted or encouraged the principal offence. In practice, intent may be evidenced through a fluid course of conduct. *R v Anwar* [2016] EWCA Crim 551 clarifies that the evidence relating to the intent of each accused must be assessed across the whole course of conduct rather than at one point in that course.

We can compare this to the dance. Repeated chanting, physical convergence, continued assault and other conduct may provide evidence of joint participation. Nonetheless, age, visibility, fear, and the identity and role of the principal actors remain relevant and material.

4.5.4 Piggy's death

Piggy's death provides a clearer principal case in the novel. While Piggy is in the path, Roger intentionally releases a heavy rock from above. The intent to kill or cause grievous bodily harm is the key question. The jury may determine the necessary intent under the *Woollin* [1999] AC 82 direction. Under *Woollin*, the necessary intent may be inferred where death or serious injury was a virtually certain result of Roger's act and Roger appreciated that fact. The targeting context is also relevant to that inference.

Roger's earlier escalation from releasing smaller stones to using the lever makes virtual certainty of at least serious harm more readily inferable than in a single impulsive act. Age and any valid defence remain separately relevant.

The responsibility of Jack and other tribe members is less direct. Jack's chain of command, past violence, and approval of coercion are relevant. Nonetheless, domestic law does not impose overall command responsibility upon a child leader for each act committed by a follower. A secondary party must intend to assist or encourage the commission of the offence. Presence, association, animosity or foresight alone is not enough after *Jogee*.

4.5.5 The hunt for Ralph

The last hunt offers the most robust attempted-murder assessment. According to Section 1 of the Criminal Attempts Act 1981, for an accused to be charged with an attempt, the prosecution must show that the accused has done an act which is more than merely preparatory to the commission of the offence and that the accused had the required intent. Attempted murder requires an intention to kill. An intention merely to cause grievous bodily harm is not sufficient.

The structured search, use of spears, the message that a stick had been sharpened at both ends, attacks on Ralph's hiding places, and use of fire to drive Ralph towards the hunters are capable of supporting an inference of intent to kill. The roles that people play matter: if someone participates in the search without knowledge of the lethal plan, they may not share the relevant intention. A guard who intentionally blocks Ralph's escape, a hunter who flings a spear, and a leader who commands the killing may each occupy different pathways to principal, secondary, or inchoate liability. The naval officer's intervention is an external circumstance that prevents completion, which is consistent with attempt rather than voluntary abandonment.

4.5.6 Defences and mitigation

The island fosters real threats of starvation, fear, insecurity, and the absence of adult protection. While these circumstances may influence belief, capacity, and sentencing, they do not create a general survival defence to intentional homicide. Self-defence requires a belief in an imminent unlawful threat and a proportionate response. In England and Wales, duress is not a defence to murder or attempted murder, though it may still be relevant to offences of lesser gravity and to sentencing.

Table 6. Comparator summary of England and Wales law and the Rome Statute by issue.

Issue	England and Wales comparator	Rome Statute result	Required fact or limit
Territory	Territorial state cannot be identified; UK BOT scenario possible but unsupported by narrative evidence; high seas not applicable to land.	Article 12 territorial precondition cannot be confirmed.	Geographic and sovereignty evidence
Nationality	British identity suggests a possible personal nexus under OAPA 1861 s. 9 as modified; CJA 1948 has limited direct relevance; SCA 2015 offence-specific; CJA 2009 applies once jurisdiction is established.	UK nationality could support Art. 12 only for an Art. 5 crime.	Precise legal nationality of each accused
Simon	Murder or unlawful-act manslaughter; loss of control (CJA 2009 ss. 54–56) requires an individualized qualifying	No widespread or systematic attack; no armed-conflict	Fatal acts, causation, honest belief, intent; qualifying trigger

Issue	England and Wales comparator	Rome Statute result	Required fact or limit
	trigger, not established by generalized fear or darkness alone; actor-specific secondary liability under post- <i>Jogee/Anwar</i> standards.	nexus; all actors are children.	
Piggy	Roger: <i>Woollin</i> virtual-certainty direction available; others require intended assistance or encouragement under post- <i>Jogee</i> standards.	Isolated homicide does not become a core international crime.	Age, virtual certainty of serious harm, encouragement by others
Ralph	Attempted murder if act is more than preparatory and intent to kill is proved; roles differentiated.	No armed conflict or population-directed attack.	Individual knowledge, purpose, and acts
Age	Under ten: no offence; ages ten to seventeen: child-specific prosecution and sentence.	Article 26 excludes every person under eighteen.	Exact age at each alleged offence
Complementarity	State investigation is the primary route where jurisdiction exists.	Article 17 filters cases; it does not create subject-matter or personal jurisdiction.	A qualifying Article 5 case, which is absent

Note: The comparator is contemporary and non-retroactive; it does not assert that the island is UK territory.

4.6 International criminal jurisdiction

4.6.1 Subject-matter jurisdiction

The book includes killing, serious violence, coercion, and organised pursuit. None of these descriptions taken individually proves a crime under Article 5 of the Rome Statute. Genocide can be excluded because there is no intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a protected group. Aggression can also be excluded because the conduct is not an act of aggression by a state, and the boys are not persons directing state political or military action.

To establish a crime against humanity, one of the listed acts must be committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population, with knowledge of the attack. Article 7 further treats the attack as a course of conduct involving multiple listed acts carried out pursuant to or in furtherance of a state or organizational policy.

Jack's tribe's structure is familiar in the ordinary sociological sense. However, the text does not establish the contextual scale required by international criminal law. The text does not establish a

population-directed attack or the required policy apparatus. The two deaths and pursuit involving a small group that became marooned are serious interpersonal crimes, but they are not a widespread or systematic attack on a civilian population.

Conduct amounting to a war crime must, first of all, take place in the context of an armed conflict. Secondly, there must be a nexus to that armed conflict. Article 8 of the Rome Statute includes two pertinent thresholds with respect to non-international armed conflict. Article 8(2)(c) and (d) concerns armed conflicts not of an international character under the minimum threshold reflected in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. Article 8(2)(e) and (f) covers the narrower category of protracted armed conflicts between governmental authorities and organized armed groups, or between such groups.

The decision of the ICTY Appeals Chamber in *Prosecutor v Tadić* (IT-94-1-AR72, 1995) established the basic threshold of protracted armed violence between parties with a sufficient degree of military organization.

The Haradinaj judgment (Cullen and Öberg, 2008) highlights that the assessment of the intensity of violence and the organisational capacity of an armed group must be based on the full factual record and not merely inferred from the weapons employed or isolated or sporadic clashes. The Lubanga case (ICC-01/04-01/06, 2012) addressed organizational requirements for a group using children in hostilities. It also confirmed that the required nexus is a functional link between the conduct and the armed conflict rather than mere spatial or temporal proximity.

The facts presented do not fulfil any of the contemplated thresholds. There is no governmental authority as one party, no organised armed group meeting the Tadić standard on the other, and no confrontation between two sufficiently organised groups. Internal disturbances, tensions, riots, and isolated or sporadic acts of violence are expressly excluded under Article 8(2)(d). The island violence falls within those exclusions. The existence of adult warfare beyond the island does not provide the required nexus. A functional connection between the specific act and the conflict is required. A mere temporal or geographic connection to a wider conflict situation is not sufficient.

4.6.2 Temporal, territorial, personal, and admissibility limits

The narrative is historically situated near the publication period in a wartime setting. In light of Article 11 of the Statute and the principle of non-retroactivity, if the conduct is viewed as having occurred before the Statute became effective on 1 July 2002, then the ICC inquiry ends. In the context of Security Council referral scenarios and the retroactive application of the Statute, Dias (2018) explores this question in detail. The contemporary hypothetical used here removes this obstacle temporarily and only for the purpose of analysing the remaining provisions.

Unless the Security Council acts according to Article 13(b), Article 12 would require some territorial or nationality basis. It is unknown which state owns the island. British nationality is suggested, and the United Kingdom is a State Party. It would still be necessary to prove the nationality of each accused. These preconditions would become relevant only if a core international crime had first been established.

Article 26 is the key obstacle to personal jurisdiction. A person who was under eighteen at the relevant time is outside the jurisdiction of the Court. Golding's actors are children. The provision

is categorical and does not depend on maturity, leadership, brutality, seriousness or gravity of the harm. Complementarity does not affect the result. Article 17 pertains to a situation where the case is already within the jurisdiction of the Court.

Article 17 does not expand Article 5, nor does it displace the armed-conflict requirement. In the same way, it does not displace the contextual elements found in Article 7 or override Article 26.

4.6.3 *International child-rights law*

According to Article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child accused of violating penal law must be treated with dignity, receive a fair hearing, enjoy privacy, and be dealt with proportionately. Reintegration and taking on a constructive role in society are also emphasized. Article 37 restricts cruel treatment, unlawful detention, and deprivation of liberty. Article 39 addresses recovery and reintegration of child victims of abuse or armed conflict.

Therefore, the boys are potential offenders as well as potential victims. The very conditions that Article 39 addresses include the isolation of the island, hunger, fear and the total absence of adult protective authority. These norms modify the character of domestic accountability but do not erase it.

4.7 Integrated jurisdictional map

Four boundaries are revealed by the joint conclusions. Enforcement and jurisdiction are differentiated by the first boundary. Although the island has no tribunal, state jurisdiction may be retained.

International crimes and domestic crimes are distinguished by the second boundary. Homicide may remain a matter for national prosecution when the contextual elements of the Rome Statute are not satisfied.

The third boundary differentiates group discourse from individual responsibility. The tribe may organize collective violence, but each accused requires proof of conduct and intent.

The fourth distinguishes international criminal law from international child-rights law. The ICC does not have jurisdiction over the boys, while the Convention on the Rights of the Child constrains national proceedings.

Evidence associated with the corpus supports the map but does not solely determine it. The emergence of chief, spear, savage, tribe, and coercive markers indicates the formation of a violent organization. The fall of assembly and the later reduction of conch indicate the loss of contestable procedure. The narrative community cannot process its own violence because accountability terms remain scarce. Subsequent doctrinal analysis reveals that, while these shifts are relevant to evidence of organization, purpose, and participation, they are not sufficient to establish an international crime or collective guilt.

5. Discussion

5.1 From apparent conflict to asymmetrical allocation

The jurisdictional conflict is better understood as a problem of reclassification rather than a choice between two available courts or a decision to prioritize one over the other. The relationship

between domestic and international criminal law overlaps in cases involving core international crimes where a state can also reasonably prosecute. On the island in Golding's work, that overlap does not arise. The laws concerning domestic homicide are likely to apply through a nationality connection. On the other hand, substantive, temporal, territorial, personal and gravity barriers arise for the ICC.

The asymmetrical relationship leaves scope for domestic jurisdiction, which remains highly fact-sensitive, while ICC jurisdiction is excluded on several independent grounds. This conclusion rejects the idea that a complete local institutional collapse makes the resulting violence more readily international. An international characterization may appear most tempting where institutional collapse is most complete. The Rome Statute, however, does not permit that move. It is not a global murder court but a court with limited jurisdiction over defined contextual crimes.

Article 26 also reflects a deliberate institutional choice concerning child accountability. As Quenivet (2017) explains, leaving child accountability to national systems and human-rights supervision is not a concession to impunity. Rather, the rehabilitation and reintegration objectives of child justice sit uneasily with the retributive and expressive functions associated with the ICC.

A postcolonial reading reinforces the point from a different angle. According to Gilmour (2015), Golding's fiction engages specifically with the entropy of British institutional authority. Furthermore, the naval officer who cannot complete the judgement his presence promises in the novel's closing scene dramatizes precisely the gap between enforcement capacity and legal closure that this study maps.

5.2 What the corpus adds to legal interpretation

The computational findings provide a trio of contributions. Initially, they demonstrate how coercion does not completely replace institutional language. The presence of civic-order markers peaks during the middle phase when the legitimacy of rules is contested. Legal collapse is seen here as a discursive struggle, not a rupture. Also, violence rises before the emergence of coercive governance. The effectiveness of command depends upon the foundation created by fear and hunting. Lastly, the final stage fuses growing coercion with a low level of accountability. The tribe can impose tasks and punish disobedience, but it does not have a public language for reviewing wrongdoing.

The findings extend the sovereignty readings of Diken and Laustsen (2006) and Altaç (2020). The state of exception is not only visible in spectacular violence. What is built is a measurable lexical redistribution from assembly to tribe, from speaking rights to commands and weapons.

The analysis then qualifies the political metaphor. Just because an organization may be strong enough to dominate a small island group does not mean that it is capable of sustaining an Article 7 attack against a civilian population. Nor does that automatically make it an organization capable of meeting the Tadić/Haradinaj threshold for a non-international armed conflict under Article 8.

5.3 The conch, the spear, and the conditions of legality

The conch is commonly treated as a legal symbol. The corpus evidence supports a narrower interpretation: it functions as a technology of authorization whose efficacy depends on shared

practice. The 180 occurrences of the conch do not measure legal success. Most of the uses that emerge in the middle phase are in contexts of contestation, according to concordance inspection, including phrases such as took the conch away from him and nobody listens to you with the conch anymore, rather than scenes of uncontested procedural authority.

In the final phase, uses cluster around the Castle Rock scene and are followed by the physical destruction of the conch. An uninterruptedly high count indicates repeated attempts to invoke, contest, carry, disobey and finally destroy the rule of recognition. In simpler terms, the conch cannot enforce its own rule. Ralph lacks an institution with authority to impose consequences for non-compliance with that rule.

The spear does the opposite. Its authority operates irrespective of consent. The number increased from 9 in Phase 1 to 53 in the last phase. The spear turns command into instantaneous bodily peril. It helps individualize conduct for legal purposes: who carried, threw, sharpened, supplied or ordered use of the spear may become material evidence for principal and secondary liability. It thus remains plausible that the same object that creates synergy and group authority may assist a court in later differentiating individual roles.

5.4 Child-centred responsibility without impunity

The separation of domestic and ICC jurisdiction based on the age limit is more than a procedural technicality. It encompasses different institutional functions. The ICC addresses adults responsible for grave crimes of international concern. The domestic child justice system must ensure accountability and take into account development, welfare, proportionality and reintegration.

Golding's work complicates this schema because the children cause serious harm, but they also suffer harm of their own through abandonment, fear, injury and the consequences of an adult war they did not choose.

A child-centred approach does not mean classifying the death of Simon or Piggy as an accident when the evidence supports intentional violence. It requires precise differentiation. Roger's alleged behaviour is not equivalent to that of a frightened participant at the edge of the dance.

Jack's leadership is probative but does not displace the mental element of the specific offence. Ralph and Piggy's involvement in Simon's death cannot be determined merely from their later political alignment. The Convention on the Rights of the Child places constraints on the process, but it is not a mechanism for collective exculpation.

5.5 Implications for law and literature

This study suggests that law and literature scholarship can move beyond mere illustrative quotation. The legal question first directs the corpus categories. After that, the evidence contained in the corpus identifies the chapters which should be read closely and those which may serve as counterexamples. Close reading reconstructs event-specific facts, while doctrine exposes the limits of legal classification.

The robustness analysis indicates that this selection is stable: the chapters closest to the legal events are also the chapters with the highest density of authority-relevant discourse regardless of lexicon specification. Accordingly, the hybrid selection procedure reduces the risk of two errors: treating

a memorable scene as representative of the novel as a whole, and applying a legal category before its constituent contextual elements have been tested.

The novel also shows how legal meaning survives failed enforcement. The boys remember rules, offices, punishment, nationality and rescue even where no outside authority can act. At the time of rescue, the officer's uniform and weapons restore the possibility of enforcement.

The fact that he cannot understand what he sees, which Carey (2009) traces to Golding's acute awareness of institutional blindness, suggests that institutional presence does not guarantee adequate judgment. The investigation would have to start by hearing from children whose language has been reshaped by fear and group violence. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a framework for that task, even though Golding leaves it incomplete.

6. Limitations and Future Research

This study has six main limitations.

First, it analyses one novel and cannot generalise to real isolated communities or child offending. The computational approach follows the diagnostic use of corpus tools on a single text (Eve, 2019), rather than the macroanalysis of large-scale corpora (Jockers, 2013). Comparison with a larger corpus of island, survival, or juvenile-governance narratives could determine whether the discourse patterns identified here are typical of the genre or specific to the novel.

Second, the source file lacks reliable edition metadata. Chapter locators provide a more defensible basis than page citations, although this reduces compatibility with editions used by other researchers.

Third, interpretive choices are involved in phase segmentation and lexicon construction. The segments are divided by narrative anchors, not just equal chapter count, though another analyst may delineate the segments differently. The lexicons are available in the Supplementary Data Appendix, and alternative lexicons can be substituted using the saved frequency tables. The robustness analysis reported in Section 3.3 indicates that the chapter rankings do not change under alternative specifications of the lexicon, including one that omits the most plot-distinctive words. We do not put forward the Category Influence Index or the Composite Chapter Score as better measures than established keyness measures (Egbert and Biber, 2019; Gries, 2008) for general corpus work. Their relevance here is limited to the diagnostic purpose of the twelve-chapter corpus.

Fourth, TF-IDF and simple frequency are unable to capture irony, negation, reference, and speaker attribution. Rule may be endorsed or mocked, while conch may symbolize authority or its destruction. Analysing concordance contexts helps but does not eliminate this limitation. Speaker attribution, collocation networks, semantic-role labeling, and contextual embeddings could add precision.

Fifth, the legal analysis is a hypothetical comparator, not a reasoned advisory opinion on any actual prosecution. The island's location, the precise nationality and ages of the boys, forensic causation, witness testimony, and historical date remain uncertain. A different domestic comparator, including the law of a plausible territorial state in a mid-twentieth-century geopolitical context or

British Overseas Territories law if the island could be so identified, could provide different jurisdictional routes, minimum ages, offences and defences.

Sixth, the colonial and postcolonial dimensions of the novel's authority vocabulary are acknowledged more than they are fully pursued. Future work should incorporate postcolonial frameworks such as Gilmour (2015) and Whittle (2017) as a more fully developed analytical frame, examine translations to test whether authority markers persist cross-linguistically, compare jurisdictional analyses under different domestic legal systems, and apply the method to a comparative corpus of island, survival, and juvenile-governance narratives.

7. Conclusion

A twelve-chapter *Lord of the Flies* corpus highlights an interesting shift in discourse. The amount of violence-and-hunting language doubles after the initial phase; the distribution of coercive-authority markers increases nearly five-fold by the final phase; tribe, chief, spear, and savage all become definitional terms. Civic vocabulary peaks during contestation and remains present in scenes of institutional disintegration, as the concordance analysis of *conch* confirms. Throughout, there remains a rarity of accountability vocabulary. Through a robustness analysis across the three lexicon specifications, we show that this chapter-level pattern is invariant: ranking $11 > 5 > 12$ remains stable with the original, reduced, or conservative lexicons.

Doctrinal analysis develops this into a legal boundary map, in the sense introduced in Section 1: not a verdict on Golding's characters, and not merely an application of existing law to a literary plot, but a demonstration of where legal categories admit evidence and where they do not. The modern laws of England and Wales contain plausible routes for extraterritorial homicide, attempt and secondary liability. In particular, individual analyses include the loss-of-control defence for Simon's killing, the Woollin virtual-certainty direction for Roger's role in Piggy's killing, and post-Jogee/Anwar secondary liability standards throughout. Every route depends on evidence of nationality, age, conduct, intent, causation, and participation. The island does not have identified territorial sovereignty, and the narrative evidence is not sufficient to support a British Overseas Territories comparator or flag-state reasoning confidently.

International criminal jurisdiction does not provide an alternative forum. There are contextual barriers to treating the alleged conduct as crimes against humanity or war crimes under the Tadić/Haradinaj/Lubanga jurisprudence; the historical context gives rise to a temporal bar; the territorial context is uncertain; and Article 26 excludes persons under eighteen from ICC jurisdiction.

The apparent domestic-international conflict therefore becomes a division of legal labour. Domestic law bears primary responsibility for individualized accountability. International child-rights law mainly governs that process's fairness, proportionality, dignity, and reintegrative objective. The island's isolation suspends enforcement, but it does not suspend legal analysis. The novel's legal implication is that a community may quickly acquire the language and machinery of command before it acquires the institutions necessary to judge violence justly. A natural next step for future researchers is to test this jurisdictional map against a comparative corpus of island, survival, and juvenile-governance narratives, to establish whether the asymmetry identified here an extensive domestic vocabulary of liability paired with a categorical international exclusion is a general feature of such narratives or a property specific to Golding's text.

Declarations

Ethics statement: The research utilized a published literary work and did not include human participants, personal data, or confidential records. This study did not require institutional ethics approval.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Data availability: Aggregate corpus statistics, preprocessing logic, complete discourse lexicons, chapter-level frequency tables, and results from robustness analyses are provided in the Supplementary Data Appendix that accompanies this manuscript. The complete text is not redistributed because it is copyrighted. Researchers should use a lawfully obtained edition and document any edition-dependent differences.

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