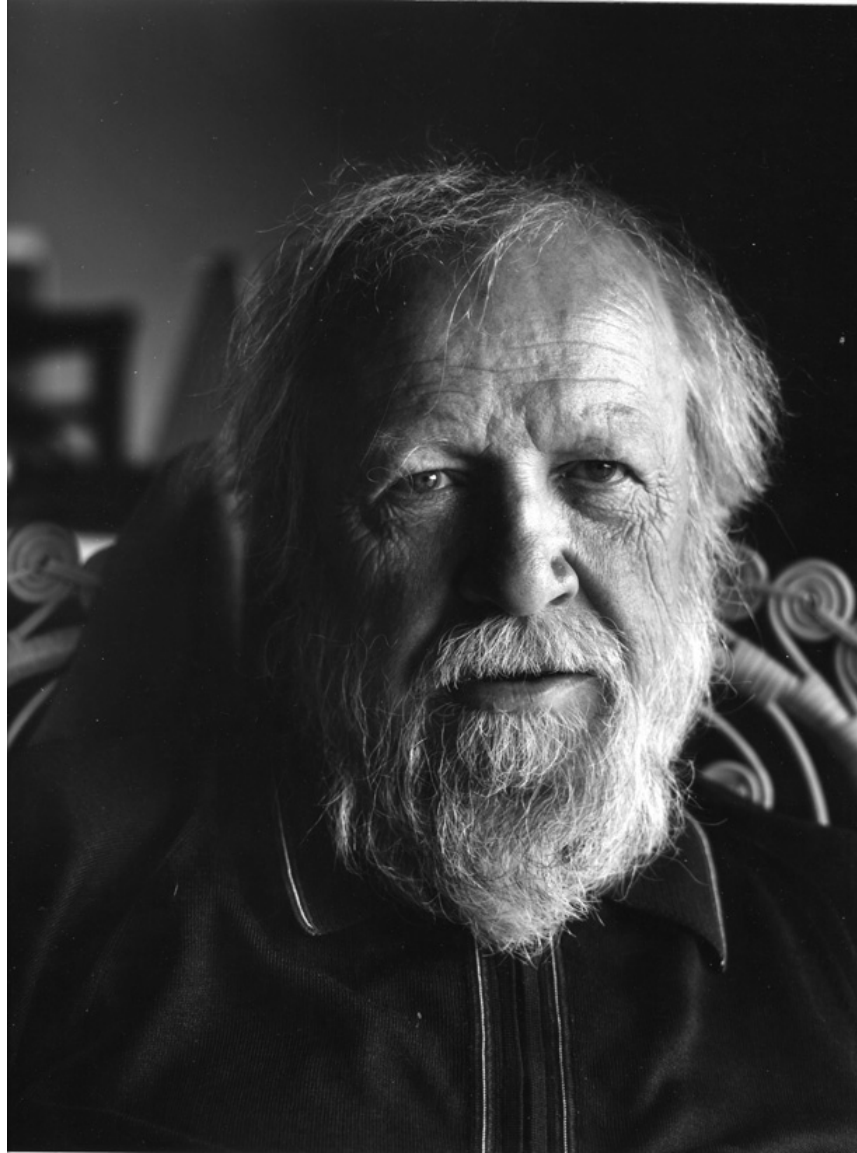


Arena



**The Dreams of
WILLIAM GOLDING**

Saturday 17 March, 9:30PM on BBC 2



Arena: The Dreams of William Golding reassesses the significance and importance of William Golding – one of only six English writers to have been awarded the Nobel Prize since World War II. It looks at this exceptional and extraordinarily popular writer from a critical perspective as well as through the eyes of his family and those who knew him best - including Golding's daughter Judy and son David, both of whom speak frankly about their father's demons, and his biographer, John Carey.



When his first novel *Lord of the Flies* was published in 1954 William Golding was an unknown 42 year old schoolmaster from Salisbury. Golding's tale of malevolent schoolboys and social breakdown challenged 1950s post-war optimism and asked disturbing and provocative questions about the nature of evil. Today *Lord of the Flies* remains compulsory reading, and has retained its ability to shock even in an age of ASBOs, serial bullying and binge drinking.

Lord of the Flies quickly acquired an iconic status as one of the great allegories of the Cold War period and had an enormous influence on subsequent writers – most notably Ian McEwan. Golding is also the idol of Stephen King who talks about his importance in the film. In 1963, *Lord of the Flies* was made into a classic feature film by Peter Brook, which will be shown following *Arena* on BBC2 on Saturday 17 March.



Golding always bemoaned the fact that his reputation rested on a book that he considered juvenile and poorly written – but it remains the key to one of the most extraordinary writers England has ever produced. *Lord of the Flies*, and the string of masterpieces which followed, are also the product of an exceptional life (recently revealed by John Carey in his highly acclaimed biography), which is explored fully on film for the first time. Tormented by alcoholism, overwhelmed by insecurity, famously reclusive, notoriously cantankerous, Golding's own story is as remarkable as any of his books.



Other contributors include Nigel Williams, who adapted *Lord of the Flies* for the stage and got to know Golding well, Stephen King, who was strongly influenced by Golding as a boy, the philosopher John Gray, who regards Golding as one of the most original thinkers of the twentieth century, and the Very Revd June Osborne, the Dean of Salisbury Cathedral, who discusses Golding's moral purpose in *The Spire*. Benedict Cumberbatch, who starred in the 2004 BBC adaptation of Golding's sea trilogy, *To the Ends of the Earth*, reads extracts from his books.

ACCESS

Arena has been given access to *Tullimaar*, Golding's house in Cornwall, which is virtually unchanged since he died, and where his neighbours included Pete Townsend of The Who; to his publishers, Faber and Faber, who have opened their extensive archive – including the infamous 1953 rejection letter which described *Lord of the Flies* as 'rubbish and dull'; to the Golding family's photographs and home movies, and to the journal which Golding kept from 1971 until his death, in which he recorded his disturbing and hallucinogenic dreams.



ARCHIVE

The BBC archive contains a wealth of material, including a full length *Monitor* and a *Bookmark* profile, which, supplemented by two major *South Bank Shows* (Melvyn Bragg idolised Golding, and is one of the witnesses in the film), provides a rich picture of Golding over several decades. Just as he did with *Arena: TS Eliot* (which recently won the 2010 Grierson Award for Best Arts Documentary), director Adam Low uses this fantastic archival resource to delve deeper into Golding's extraordinary life than has been possible before.



INFLUENCES

Lord of the Flies was directly influenced by Golding's horror at the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities and his dark vision permeates many of his books. Tormented by feelings of social inadequacy (his father was a schoolmaster), Golding struggled with alcoholism, and his life was clouded by the schizophrenia that affected his son David who still lives in the family home in Cornwall. Golding captained a rocket ship in World War II but gave up sailing when his own boat was sunk by a Japanese tanker in 1967 – nearly drowning his entire family. His powerful, often allegorical, novels deal with subjects as diverse as Neanderthal man (*The Inheritors*), Ancient Egypt (*The Scorpion God*) and the building of a medieval cathedral (*The Spire*).

SCHOOLMASTER

Golding taught for more than twenty years at Bishop Wordsworth's School in Salisbury. His nickname was 'Scruff', and several of his old pupils appear in the film. They reveal that Golding often wrote his books during lessons, and even got the boys to count the number of words on the pages of his manuscripts.



NOBEL PRIZE

In 1983 Golding became the only English writer in the second half of the 20th century other than Churchill to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. The Nobel citation said the award was given *"for his novels which, with the perspicuity of realistic narrative art and the diversity and universality of myth, illuminate the human condition in the world of today"*. But one of the jury in Stockholm objected, and described Golding as 'a small English phenomenon of no importance'.

SEVEN THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT LORD OF THE FLIES

YOUTH

Golding's first and most famous novel has sold over 40 million copies to date worldwide. It is on the national curriculum and has recently overtaken *The Catcher in the Rye* as the book most read by young people in the United States.

LOST

The TV series *Lost* draws many of its initial plot devices and themes from *Lord of the Flies*, most notably being based on a plane crash on a deserted island, the existence of a 'beast' and the emerging tensions between two leaders, one of whom happens to be named Jack. The overweight Hurley occasionally serves as the voice of reason, much like the novel's Piggy.

U2 and IRON MAIDEN

The final song, *Shadows and Tall Trees* on U2's debut album, takes its title from the novel's chapter of the same name. The heavy metal band Iron Maiden composed a song about the novel, with the title *Lord of the Flies*.

STEPHEN KING

Stephen King, a huge admirer of Golding, says that the Castle Rock in *Lord of the Flies* was the inspiration for the town of the same name that has appeared in a number of his novels. The book itself also appears prominently in *Hearts in Atlantis*, *Misery* and *Cujo*. He has agreed to write the introduction to the new centenary edition of *Lord of the Flies*.

THE SIMPSONS

The "Das Bus" episode *The Simpsons* is based on the novel: schoolchildren are alone on a remote island, there is a presumed "monster", Milhouse's glasses are used to light a fire, etc. Another episode, "Kamp Krusty", includes a pig's head on a spear, children using primitive weapons and wearing war paint, and a burning effigy.

THE BOYS

Golding based the schoolboys in the novel on his own pupils at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury. He wrote much of the book, originally called *The Stranger That Lies Within*, in the classroom and read early drafts to the boys. Now in their 60s, many of them have vivid memories of their Nobel Prize-winning English teacher.

MATTHEW BOURNE

Matthew Bourne choreographed a powerful contemporary version of *Lord of the Flies*, set in a disused theatre with a cast of disadvantaged teenagers, in Glasgow in 2011.



THE DREAMS OF WILLIAM GOLDING

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