



## Free Fall

*William Golding*

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Somehow, somewhere, Sammy Mountjoy lost his freedom, the faculty of freewill 'that cannot be debated but only experienced, like a colour or the taste of potatoes'. As he retraces his life in an effort to discover why he no longer has the power to choose & decide for himself, the narrative moves between England & a POW camp in Germany.

## Free Fall Details

Date : Published 1973 by Faber and Faber (first published 1959)

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Author : William Golding

Format : Paperback 248 pages

Genre : Fiction, Classics, Literature, Literary Fiction, Novels

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## From Reader Review Free Fall for online ebook

### Judy says

I finished this book three weeks ago. I kept no notes as I read it and was enduring various major family and physical issues at the time. All I remember is that it moved me, it spoke to me. It was his most accessible book so far (I am reading Golding's books in the order that he wrote them.)

A man who was born in poverty to a mother supporting herself by prostitution, who found himself an orphan at five years old or so, who became a successful painter, looks back over his life. He wants to discover when he lost his freedom, his power of choice.

What was extremely interesting to me was that he survived all manner of horrific incidents but though in his adulthood he had managed to achieve the usual security one strives to accomplish, he had lost his personal freedom.

Well, if that isn't the story of life, I don't know what is. I have also discovered through my reading project that it was THE major concern of 1950s literature.

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### Mark Lawrence says

This is my favourite book. It isn't for the story - though that is very interesting - it isn't for the cleverness of the twist - though it is clever - it's because it represents a brief period of clarity when one of the great writers of our time really got to grips with the business of what being human is all about. Golding exercises a subtle genius here and just lays out truths for you. There aren't necessarily answers to accompany those truths, but he says what you know, in ways that you couldn't say it - and somehow it's comforting to know he has seen and felt what you have.

This is a book written by a literary giant, and what you find here rather depends on what you bring and at what point in your life you arrive.

Here are snippets from a passage that reached me - if they leave you cold then maybe come back later:

**My darkness reaches out and fumbles at a typewriter with its tongs. Your darkness reaches out with your tongs and grasps a book. There are twenty modes of change, filter and translation between us.**

[...]

**Deep calls out to deep. Our communion (communication) must of needs be imperfect for we are fallen creatures, yet we must of needs make the effort.**

[...]

**I tick. I exist. I am poised eighteen inches over the black rivets you are reading, I am in your place. I am shut in a bone box and trying to fasten myself onto white paper. The rivets join us together and**

**yet, for all the passion, we share nothing but our sense of division.**

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### **Momina Masood says**

*"I am the sum of them. I carry round with me this load of memories. Man is not an instantaneous creature, nothing but a physical body and the reaction of the moment. He is an incredible bundle of miscellaneous memories and feelings, of fossils and coral growths. I am not a man who was a boy looking at a tree. I am a man who remembers being a boy looking at a tree."*

I can't help but feel that the writer who penned the celebrated *Lord of the Flies* is very underrated, and not appreciated as much as he deserves to be outside academic circles. For though this novel might not be as powerful as Golding's magnum opus, it is still a painful meditation on human freedom, the possibility and failure of intersubjectivity in our postmodern world. The narrative solipsism, thus, fairly suits the concept of man's essential ignorance of the minds around him, his loneliness thereof, and the angst and despair that results within. Sammy Mountjoy deconstructs his past with the hope of trying to understand exactly when, where and how he lost his freedom. Golding being one of the most empathetic writers of childhood takes us through young Sammy's life, his innocent admirations, to his adolescence and the discovery and exploration that follows of one's sexuality. The writing is honest and brutal, with instances of lyricism, but stylistics is not Golding's concern with this novel. He, of course, takes from the modernist aesthetic of a subjective POV, the narrative being all in the first-person, but where modernists before focused on a kaleidoscopic version of reality, including various POVs, Golding's novel, as I wrote above, is painfully solipsistic. There is little dialogue, much of it is fragmented, expressive mostly of the failure to communicate on Sammy's part.

*"To communicate is our passion and our despair."*

Characters are seen and judged through Sammy's eyes, and we never really get to know anyone deeply, intimately. What we are offered are Sammy's "ideas" of them, their significance in his life. He delves in his most shameful memories with the bravado that is very much like him, almost Dostoevskyan, remembering how he was marred by others, and how he ended up destroying those he loved. Characters in this novel are not flesh-and-blood individuals in their own right--they are Sammy's hell and heaven, his sins, his redemption. We all are the origin, center, the ultimate telos of our consciousness and view others in relation

to our own self. To transcend the confines of our subjectivity and "empathize" has been, thus, reduced to an idyllic concept in the postmodern age, where minds cannot understand each other, intersubjectivity cannot be achieved, where communication is just mere noise and babbling.

*"The rivets join us together and yet for all the passions we share nothing but our sense of division."*

This novel never quite reaches what it sets out to achieve but achieves many other things in the process. Apart from studying the possibilities of human agency and freedom, there is in the last chapters a dialectic drawn between the rationalist interpretation that science offers of man positioned carefully in a material universe, and the spiritualism of religion and its construction of man as God's deputy. This science/religion dialectic is not important in itself but for Sammy's sake as he comes to the conclusion:

*"Useless to say that a man is a whole continent, pointless to say that each consciousness is a whole world because each consciousness is a dozen worlds."*

Golding is more than the guy who wrote *Lord of the Flies*, though it has been enough in itself to carve his legacy in modern British literature. He is also the writer of *Free Fall*: a novel that questions the loose threads which bind our postmodern existence, the vulnerability of man, and his futile attempts at identification and "knowledge" which might bring him some sense of security. In the deterministic scheme of things where every man is the sum of all that has happened to him, where he is the convenient "effect" of sociopolitic, historical, and personal influences, what hope can he have for freedom.... or what is freedom anyway?

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### **Elnaz says**

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## Munema says

I loved this book so much that I'm struggling to verbalize my thoughts. Everything about it was amazing. That's an insufficient adjective. "Enchanting" is more suitable.

I had never reading William Golding before. I really only bought this book because it was for \$1 and the cover was cool (my cover shows a mangled man free-falling into a city). Then, in anticipation of a God-awful six hour bus ride, I decided to check it out.

Holyyyy... it blew me away.

The writing is amazing. It's a stream-of-consciousness novel, which normally I dislike because it's badly done by amateurs. But Golding took it to a whole new level.

The protagonist and narrator, Samuel Mountjoy, is an artist who is recollecting when he "lost his freedom". (Honestly, I couldn't help but think how unfair it was that Mountjoy got to be both a famous artist AND a really really good narrator.)

Anyway... so Mountjoy takes us through his life, with his semi-normal Ma, Communist tendencies, calf-love with Beatrice, and prisoner-of-war experience.

So the story is super interesting. But basically, my main super-favourite thing about this book is the introspection that Mountjoy is subjecting himself to. Golding has a way with words, which, rather than sounding pretentious, comes across as profound and deep. The writing is absolutely magical. The way he describes things feels as though you're reading a painting, or reading a musical piece.. it's simply wonderful.

Mountjoy's own personal demons are only revealed near the end, but the sense of torment and wretchedness form the backbone of the novel. It leaves you constantly wondering - *why* is he so desperate to find his freedom again? What has he done or what has happened to him? (Turns out to be both.)

The way he links experiences with philosophies (he says at the beginning that he has tried all the major philosophies and they hang like hats upon his wall - none quite fit), speculating about human personality, searching the depths of both himself and those who have affected him... it's really beautiful.

Ahh I love this book!

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## Daniel says

I wonder, at times, how much we fool ourselves when we look back on past actions and reflect upon their consequences. How objective can we be, given that we have to face ourselves and the memory of what we've done every day that we have left on this Earth? "How do you live with yourself?" That's a question from an outside perspective, a question that can't be anything but rhetorical; what else is one to do?

Here's a freaky question that I haven't delved into (more peeked at, the way Pandora might have before saying "Fuck it" and prizing the lid all the way): what kind of conclusions does a person with suicidal

tendencies reach about his own actions? Does he always come up short?

Sam Mountjoy, the narrator of this story, is looking for a moment in his life when he chose one way over another. With each memory, he asks, "Here?" and until late in the story, the answer is, "No. Not here." The closer he draws to this desired demarcation, the more he shows a thread of guilt that grows thicker with the telling. The moment, once revealed, goes into both the when and the what, the latter act delivered with the gravity of an inhuman crime.

Golding's prose is dense and excellent, and while wrapped in its layers I could empathize with Mountjoy's queries and agonies. Once I took a step back, though, I felt like I did when I watched "Reefer Madness"--as in, no shit: Mary J makes you crazy enough to kill another person?

In the case of Golding's book, I wonder if he wasn't contending with his own hang-ups about sex and love and relationships that have one without the other. Mind you, I'm not curious enough to look into this (not even on a wiki level); I do hope, though, that he didn't go through anything like his narrator. Guy really needs to chill out.

## António Ganhão says

A instabilidade para a qual procura uma resposta, confunde-se com a busca do ponto exato em que passou a ter medo do escuro. O banho dado pela senhora Pascoe, o padre que apaga a luz do quarto deixando um mistério a pairar na escuridão, o carrasco com o seu lado evangelizador de busca da verdade. O prisioneiro transportado ao pináculo do templo a quem é mostrada a terra inteira, para que a sua recusa abra o caminho ao algoz. A proximidade que esbate o desejo do predador e lhe rouba o ímpeto. Somos verdadeiramente livres?

Ler mais em Acrítico - leituras dispersas

**Kmohseni says**

**Lindsey says**

To be honest I only picked up this book from the give and take pile because of Lord of the Flies, held onto it for about a year and a half, and then decided to "give it a chance" by reading the first chapter before returning it to the pile. Unfortunately I was hooked by the end of that chapter and knew that I needed to read

to the end. This book is a look at the raw forces that drive humanity and is humorous and dark and quite revealing- something I have come to expect from William Golding after Lord of the Flies. I can't say that the book was enjoyable so much as important. It had interesting, and at times terrifying insights and added a lot to my "things to think about" bank. I don't know that I will read it again but was glad that I did the first time.

**Mi Na says**

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E&cdad says

An elegant exploration of the nature of human freedom.

Ahmed says

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**Hollis says**

I was disappointed by this. It was good but I think it just lacked that unforgettable quality I have found in everything else I have read by Golding so far.

## **Mohsen Rajabi says**

**Kevin says**

More accessible than the *Inheritors*, not nearly as bleak as *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall* begins to show the fruits of William Golding's experimentation after *The Lord of the Flies*, a labor that will eventually win him the notice and recognition of the Nobel Committee.

In this novel, the narrator ponders when he lost his "free-will", essentially: at what point in his life did he make a leap such that he is stuck in "free fall" unable to choose the course of his fate? The narrator is young, or rather the space in the novel can not exceed more than his first 28 years of life, but I'm not sure if this could be termed a *bildungsroman*. There are a lot of dialectics at play here, the most notable being rational/religious, forgiveness/guilt and, of course, freedom/set-course. And quite a bit of talk about the taste of potatoes.

Sammy's story does not flow chronologically, but rather in the way time flows in memory. This means that yes, Event A caused Event B, but you may consider Event G before arriving the other two, even as you see the influences of what came before on what came after. This demonstrates Golding's masterful structuring, but also will cause some confusion initially as you here about a person that has not been talked about yet.

Sammy's story is not anything grand. It is actually incredibly mundane ("the taste of potatoes" is a recurring refrain throughout the novel). The writing however is so immediate and powerful, that the mere happenings of Sammy are more intense than the first fifteen minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*.

William Golding, all ready a master novelist, begins to hit his stride with his fourth novel, *Free Fall*. Its heavy themes, pedestrian events and poetic writing make for an experience that is enlightening, intense, and somewhat brain-frying.

**Rüveyda says**

?nsano?lu sadece bir vücut ve anl?k tepkilerden ibaret bir yarat?k de?ildir. Çe?itli hat?ralar?n ve duygular?n, fosillerin ve mercanlar?n inan?lmaz bir kar??m?d?r. Ben çocuklu?unda sedir a?ac? seyretmi? olan bir adam de?ilim. Ben bir zamanlar sedir a?ac? seyretmi? bir çocuk oldu?unu hat?rlayan bir adam?m. Buradaki fark, sonsuza dek uzanan ölü tu?lalar?n zaman?yla, ba?a sar?p tekrar seyretme zaman? aras?ndaki fark.

## Technetium says

While I enjoyed Golding's first two novels immensely, his following two have been needlessly confusing.

Freefall is... well, I am not really sure what it is - a series of loosely connected anecdotes from the main character's life, told out of sequence. Some of these elevate to being interesting on their own. I am not really sure why Golding chose to write this way. Lord of the Flies and The Inheritors were true novels, with engrossing stories that have plotlines. Checking out the brief synopses for his next few, I'm fairly pessimistic about whether or not he returns to story-telling, so I've decided to skip those and read Rites of Passage next.

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### **Frances Margaret says**

It's difficult for me to completely size up a book when the intent of the writer is unknown. I've only read one other book from Mr. Golding (Lord of the Flies, of course) and that was written in an entirely different style from Free Fall, so I couldn't help but be SLIGHTLY suspicious of some pretentious play going on here. Regardless, I am grateful for having a book like this in my collection. For one, it had one of the best opening paragraphs I've ever read. Another is that you end up a different person upon finishing it. The waterfall of curiosity, honesty and passion was rendered with such grace that it is almost unparalleled by any piece of literature I've come across. My copy of this book has been marked with underlines and scribbles and that is how I know that it did its job well. At one point I imagined what I was reading to be an autobiographical account, as it all sounded like unfiltered truth coming from the writer himself. The way the words were thrown in and around and how the conventions of grammar were ignored presented this book as a stream of consciousness that can also serve as a "literary cassette" for the suffering romantic, something to fall back to when you're having one of those days.

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### **Michael sinkofcabbages says**

Strange but i think that a lot of american kids grow up having to read lord of the flies for school. After that it seems we never really think about him again unless its for a class or something. But recently (i dont remember why) i started looking towards this author again. Id have to say this book is in my opinion even better than Lord of the Flies. It wasnt anything that i was thinking it would be. The language he uses is nothing like L O T F.

I highly recommend it.

Slightly similar fate as George Orwell?

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### **oguz kaan says**

\* Kitap boyunca meydana gelen de?i?im ve hikayenin planlanmas? kusursuz. Yine de bende eksik olan ?ey hikayeye giremememdi.

\*\*Fazlaca dolu paragraflar ve Mountjoy karakterin hayat, kader, a?k, din vs gibi bir çok konuda ki fikirlerini karaktere nak?? nak?? i?lemi?, zirvesinde bir yazar?n, bir karakterin geli?imi okuyucuya nas?l yans?t?lmal? ve hikaye anlat?m?n?n?n önemi üzerinde verilmi? uzman s?n?f? dersi gibi bir kitap bu.

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