

# Lord of the Flies



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM GOLDING

William Golding's parents brought him up to be a scientist. But he always had an interest in reading and writing, and at Oxford University he shifted from the sciences to literature. Golding fought in World War II, and was involved in the D-Day landing at Normandy. His experience in the war greatly influenced his views of human nature. After the war, he began writing novels in addition to teaching. *Lord of the Flies* was Golding's first novel, published in 1954, and was a critically acclaimed bestseller in both England and the United States. Though Golding never again achieved the same commercial success, he continued to write and went on to publish many more novels, including *The Scorpion God* (1971), *Darkness Visible* (1979), and *Fire Down Below* (1989). He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1983 and died in 1993.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

World War II influenced the themes and setting of *Lord of the Flies*. The war changed the way people in general and William Golding in particular viewed the world. World War I was for many years called the War to End All Wars. World War II proved that idea wrong and created a new sense that people are inherently warlike, power hungry, and savage. While the world war raging in *Lord of the Flies* is not World War II, it can be viewed as Golding's version of World War III. Only a few brief references to the war outside the boys' island appear in the novel, but references to an atom bomb blowing up an airport and the "Reds" make it clear that the war involves nuclear weapons and places capitalist allies including the British against the communist "Reds."

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Adventure stories such as [Robinson Crusoe](#) and *Swiss Family Robinson* depict people who are stranded on deserted islands transforming and civilizing nature. *Lord of the Flies* subverts the genre. It shows boys stranded on an island who try to civilize nature, but instead descend into savagery. While other adventure novels support the idea that man is inherently civilized, *Lord of the Flies* uses the genre to suggest exactly the opposite.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Lord of the Flies*
- **Where Written:** England

- **When Published:** 1954
- **Literary Period:** Post-war fiction
- **Genre:** Allegorical novel / Adventure novel
- **Setting:** A deserted tropical island in the middle of a nuclear world war
- **Climax:** Piggy's death
- **Point of View:** Third person omniscient

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Beelzebub.** The phrase "lord of the flies" is a translation of the Greek "Beelzebub," a devil mentioned in the New Testament. In the Bible, Beelzebub sometimes seems to be Satan himself, and at other times seems to be Satan's most powerful lieutenant.

**Coral Island.** William Golding based several of the main ideas in *Lord of the Flies* on *Coral Island* (1858), a somewhat obscure novel by Robert Ballantyne, a 19th-century British novelist. In *Coral Island*, three English boys create an idyllic society after being shipwrecked on a deserted island. They battle wild hogs, typhoons, hostile island visitors, and eventually Pirates on the South Seas.



## PLOT SUMMARY

A group of English schoolboys are marooned on a jungle **island** with no adults after their plane is shot down in the middle of a war. Two of the boys, Ralph and Piggy find a **conch** shell. Ralph blows into it like a horn, and all the boys on the island assemble. At the assembly, a boy named Jack mocks Piggy for being fat and runs against Ralph to become chief of the group. Ralph wins the election, and declares Jack the leader of the group's hunters. Soon after, Ralph, Jack, and another boy named Simon explore the island and discover wild pigs.

At a second assembly, the boys set up rules to govern themselves. The first rule is that whoever wants to speak at an assembly must hold the conch. At the meeting, one young boy claims he saw a "**beastie**" in the jungle, but Ralph dismisses it as just the product of a nightmare. Ralph then suggests that they build a signal **fire** at the top of a mountain so any passing ships will see its smoke and rescue them. The boys use Piggy's **glasses** to light the fire, but they're careless, and accidentally set part of the forest on fire. The boy who saw the beastie vanishes during the fire and is never seen again.

Time passes. Tensions rise. Ralph becomes frustrated when no one helps him build shelters. Lots of boys goof off, while Jack obsesses about hunting and takes every opportunity to mock Piggy, who is smart but weak. Simon, meanwhile, often wanders

off into the forest to meditate. The rivalry between Ralph and Jack erupts when Jack forces the boys who were supposed to watch the signal fire come hunting with him. They kill their first pig, but a ship passes while the signal fire is out, which causes a tremendous argument between Ralph and Jack.

Ralph calls an assembly hoping to set things right. But the meeting soon becomes chaotic as several younger boys talk about the beast. Now even the bigger boys are fearful. That night, after a distant airplane battle, a dead parachutist lands on the mountaintop next to the signal fire. The boys on duty at the fire think it's the beast. Soon Ralph and Jack lead an expedition to search the island for the beast. While searching, they find a rock outcropping that would make a great fort, but no beast. Tempers between the two boys soon flare up, and they climb the mountain in the dark to prove their courage. They spot the shadowy parachutist and think he's the beast.

The next morning, Jack challenges Ralph's authority at an assembly. Ralph wins, but Jack leaves the group, and most of the older boys join him. Jack's tribe paint their faces, hunt, and kill a pig. They then leave its head as an offering to the beast. Simon comes upon the head, and sees that it's the **Lord of the Flies**—the beast within all men. While Jack invites everyone to come to a feast, Simon climbs the mountain and sees the parachutist. When Simon returns to tell everyone the truth about the "beast," however, the boys at the feast have become a frenzied mob, acting out a ritual killing of a pig. The mob thinks Simon is the beast and kills him.

Jack's tribe moves to the rock fort. They steal Piggy's glasses to make fire. Ralph and his last allies, Piggy and the twins named Samneric, go to get the glasses back. Jack's tribe captures the twins, and a boy named Roger rolls a boulder from the fort that smashes the conch and kills Piggy. The next day the tribe hunts Ralph, setting fire to the forest as they do. He evades them as best he can, and becomes a kind of animal that thinks only of survival and escape. Eventually the boys corner Ralph on the beach where they first set up their society when they crash landed on the island. But the burning jungle has attracted a British Naval ship, and an officer is standing on the shore. The boys stop, stunned, and stare at the man. He jokingly asks if the boys are playing at war, and whether there were any casualties. When Ralph says yes, the officer is shocked and disappointed that English boys would act in such a manner. Ralph starts to cry, and soon the other boys start crying too. The officer, uncomfortable, looks away toward his warship.

rescued. He insists on planning and following the rules, and is able to prioritize the needs of the group above his own selfish desires. For example, Ralph builds the huts even though he dislikes the work, in contrast to the other boys who go off to play whenever they dislike doing important tasks. Ralph feels the exhilaration of hunting and killing, but he always manages to suppress savage feelings. *Ralph symbolizes law, government, and civil society.*

**Piggy** – The smartest boy on the island. Due to his obesity and asthma, Piggy is also the weakest of the biguns. Piggy believes passionately in civilization, law, and reasoning through problems, but he seldom does any work because of his obesity and his nonstop craving for food. Piggy also has a tendency to lecture and criticize. His condescension infuriates the other boys and inspires them to single him out, ridicule him, and even physically abuse him. *Piggy symbolizes science and rationality.*

**Jack** – The head boy of his chorus back in civilization, Jack becomes the leader of the hunters on the island. Jack loves power. Laws and rules interest him only because they give him the chance to punish the other boys and express his dominance over them. He loves to hunt and kill because it gives him a chance to dominate nature. Jack gets angry whenever he doesn't get his way: he believes a proper leader issues orders and is obeyed. By the end of the novel he becomes exactly that sort of leader, wielding power only for his own whim and benefit. *Jack symbolizes the human love of dominance and power.*

**Simon** – A dreamy, dark haired boy, prone to fainting spells and occasional fits. Simon is the only member of Jack's chorus who doesn't become a hunter. The most generous of the biguns, Simon helps Ralph build the shelters not out of a sense of duty, but because he wants to. Simon is also the most insightful and in many ways the bravest of the boys. Only Simon recognizes that the boys carry the **beast** within themselves; only Simon suggests that they confront the "beast" by climbing the mountain; and only Simon is unafraid when alone in the jungle. *Some critics have called Simon a symbol of Jesus Christ, but his symbolic role is actually more general. With his fits and spiritual insights, he stands for the mystics, prophets, and priests of all religions who confront and reveal the darkest aspects of human nature.*

**Roger** – A quiet, brooding member of Jack's chorus. Roger is at first little more than a mystery, a quiet, intense boy who seems to hide himself from the other boys. But as the trappings of civilization begin to recede on the island, Roger begins to reveal himself, first by throwing rocks at littleuns (and purposely missing), then by killing a pig more viciously than necessary, then by rolling a boulder down on Piggy, then by torturing Samneric, and finally by sharpening a stick on which he plans to stake Ralph's head, just as he earlier staked a pig's head. While Jack loves power, Roger loves to cause pain. *He symbolizes mankind's sadistic instincts, the suppressed desire to hurt others.*



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Ralph** – The largest and most physically powerful boy on the island. Despite his size and strength, Ralph shows no signs of wanting to dominate others and is preoccupied with being

**Samneric** – The identical twins Sam and Eric who do everything together. They so closely resemble each other that the other boys use just one name to refer to both of them. The twins prove to be less influenced by fear of the beast or Jack than any of the other boys (except Ralph and Piggy), perhaps because as twins they're less alone than any of the other boys.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Phil** – A littleun who says he saw the beast, though the "beast" turns out to be Simon coming back from the jungle.

**Percival Wemys Madison** – A littleun who states his name, address, and telephone number whenever he talks to someone older, and who says the beast comes from the sea.

**British Naval Officer** – An officer on a warship of the British Navy. He believes wholeheartedly that Britain is superior to all other civilizations.

**Henry** – A littleun at whom Roger throws rocks.

**Maurice** – A bigun.

**Robert** – A bigun.

**Bill** – A bigun.



## CIVILIZATION

Although Golding argues that people are fundamentally savage, drawn toward pleasure and violence, human beings *have* successfully managed to create thriving civilizations for thousands of years. So that disproves Golding's theory about human nature being savage, right? Wrong. The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud argued that without the innate human capacity to repress desire, civilization would not exist. In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding makes a similar argument. He depicts civilization as a veil that through its rules and laws masks the evil within every individual. So even while civilizations thrive, they are merely hiding the beast. They have not destroyed it.

The *Lord of the Flies* is a chronicle of civilization giving way to the savagery within human nature, as boys shaped by the supremely civilized British society become savages guided only by fear, superstition, and desire. And even before the boys become fully savage under Jack, Golding shows hints of the savage beast within society by showing Piggy's love of food, the way the boys laugh when Jack mocks Piggy, and all the boys' irrational fear of the "beast." And as the boys on the island shed civilization for savagery, the adults of the supposedly "civilized" world outside the island are engaged in a savage and brutal worldwide nuclear war.



## SAVAGERY AND THE "BEAST"

The "beast" is a symbol Golding uses to represent the savage impulses lying deep within every human being. Civilization exists to suppress the beast. By keeping the natural human desire for power and violence to a minimum, civilization forces people to act responsibly and rationally, as boys like Piggy and Ralph do in *Lord in the Flies*. Savagery arises when civilization stops suppressing the beast: it's the beast unleashed. Savages not only acknowledge the beast, they thrive on it and worship it like a god. As Jack and his tribe become savages, they begin to believe the beast exists physically—they even leave it offerings to win its favor to ensure their protection. Civilization forces people to hide from their darkest impulses, to suppress them. Savages surrender to their darkest impulses, which they attribute to the demands of gods who require their obedience.



## SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

Most of the boys on the island either hide behind civilization, denying the beast's existence, or succumb to the **beast's** power by embracing savagery. But in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding presents an alternative to civilized suppression and beastly savagery. This is a life of religion and spiritual truth-seeking, in which men look into their own hearts, accept that there is a beast within, and face it squarely.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



## HUMAN NATURE

William Golding once said that in writing *Lord of the Flies* he aimed to trace society's flaws back to their source in human nature. By leaving a group of English schoolboys to fend for themselves on a remote jungle island, Golding creates a kind of human nature laboratory in order to examine what happens when the constraints of civilization vanish and raw human nature takes over. In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding argues that human nature, free from the constraints of society, draws people away from reason toward savagery.

The makeshift civilization the boys form in *Lord of the Flies* collapses under the weight of their innate savagery: rather than follow rules and work hard, they pursue fun, succumb to fear, and fall to violence. Golding's underlying argument is that human beings are savage by nature, and are moved by primal urges toward selfishness, brutality, and dominance over others. Though the boys think the **beast** lives in the jungle, Golding makes it clear that it lurks only in their hearts.

Simon occupies this role in *Lord of the Flies*, and in doing so he symbolizes all the great spiritual and religious men, from Jesus to Buddha to nameless mystics and shamans, who have sought to help other men accept and face the terrible fact that the beast they fear is themselves. Of all the boys, only Simon fights through his own fear to discover that the "beast" at the mountaintop is just a dead man. But when Simon returns with the news that there's no real beast, only the beast within, the other boys kill him. Not just the savages, not just the civilized boys—all the boys kill Simon, because all of the boys lack the courage Simon displayed in facing the beast.



### THE WEAK AND THE STRONG

Within the larger battle of civilization and savagery ravaging the boys's community on the island, *Lord of the Flies* also depicts in great detail the relationships and power dynamics between the boys. In particular, the novel shows how boys fight to belong and be respected by the other boys. The main way in which the boys seek this belonging and respect is to appear strong and powerful. And in order to appear strong and powerful, boys give in to the savage instinct to ignore, pick on, mock, or even physically abuse boys who are weaker than them. Over and over, *Lord of the Flies* shows instances where a boy who feels vulnerable will save himself by picking on a weaker boy.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### THE ISLAND

The tropical island, with its bountiful food and untouched beauty, symbolizes paradise. It is like a Garden of Eden in which the boys can try to create the perfect society from scratch.



### THE LORD OF THE FLIES (THE BEAST)

The "Lord of the Flies," or the beast, inhabits the severed pig head that Jack's hunters stake into the ground and leave as an offering. Simon recognizes that the Lord of the Flies is the savage monster buried in everyone. When the Lord of Flies tells Simon "we are going to have fun on this island," it means they're going to indulge every want and desire, without regard to the rules of civilization. The name "Lord of the Flies" is a reference to the name of the Biblical devil Beelzebub, so on one level, "the beast" is a kind of savage supernatural figure, but mostly it symbolizes the evil and violence that potentially exists in the heart of every human.



### THE CONCH SHELL

The conch shell symbolizes the rule of law and civilization. It's used to call assemblies and as a kind of microphone that grants the right to speak to whomever holds it during assembly.



### PIGGY'S GLASSES

By allowing the boys to create **fire**, the first necessity of civilization, Piggy's glasses represent science and technology, mankind's power to transform and remake their environment to best suit its needs.



### FIRE

Fire is a complicated symbol in *Lord of the Flies*. Like the **glasses** that create it, fire represents technology. Yet like the atomic bombs destroying the world around the boys' island, fire is a technology that threatens destruction if it gets out of control. Fire also symbolizes the boys' connection to human civilization: their signal fire gives them hope of rescue.



### ADULTS

Adults symbolize civilization and social order to the boys. But to the reader, the world war raging outside the **island** makes it clear that the adult "civilization" is as savage as the boys' "civilization" on the island.



### THE SCAR

A rip in the forest caused by the crash landing of the boys' plane on the **island**. The scar symbolizes that man, and his savage nature, destroys paradise merely by entering it.



### THE OCEAN

The ocean symbolizes the unconscious, the thoughts and desires buried deep within all humans.



## QUOTES



Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *Lord of the Flies* published in 2003.


## Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ "Aren't there any grownups at all?"  
"I don't think so."

The fair boy said this solemnly; but then the delight of a realized ambition overcame him. In the middle of the scar he stood on his head and grinned at the reversed fat boy.  
"No grownups!"

**Related Characters:** Ralph, Piggy (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 8

**Explanation and Analysis**

The premise of the novel is that a group of young boys has been marooned on an island. Their plane has seemingly crash-landed nearby, and every adult has been killed in the wreck. Right away, the boys are delighted by the absence of adults, whom they associate with order, discipline, and punishment (as any British schoolboy might). Notice that Ralph, the boy with the fair hair, is at first solemn, *then* happy about the absence of adults. Ralph has a natural instinct to feel sympathy and compassion for the dead and the wounded. But because he's also a child, Ralph's sympathy is quickly replaced with delight.



The quotation is important because it sets up the plot of the book: a group of boys on an island, without any grownups around. On a more metaphorical level, Golding intends his scenario to be a metaphor for human society--a society in which people are free to do as they please. In short, Golding wants to ask us, What would unlimited human freedom *look* like? The fact that Golding chooses children for his microcosmic view of human society suggests that he sees children as really being no different from adults--equally foolish, equally destructive, equally clueless about how to be good. Or perhaps Golding is trying to make a more complicated point by choosing to write a dark, sinister novel about children and society: if *even* children (pure, innocent children) are capable of falling into murder and bloodshed, then what hope do adults have?


☞ "We can use this to call the others. Have a meeting. They'll come when they hear us—"

He beamed at Ralph.

"That was what you meant, didn't you? That's why you got the conch out of the water."

**Related Characters:** Piggy (speaker), Ralph

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 16

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this passage, Piggy and Ralph find a strange object, a large sea shell called a conch. Ralph is immediately attracted to the conch because of its beautiful, patterned shape. Although he doesn't quite seem to know what to do with the shell, Piggy suggests using it to "call" other children on the island--Ralph can blow into the shell to make a loud sound.

The conch is one of the most famous symbols in the novel, and it's worth discussing a little here. One could say that the conch is a symbol of civilization at its best and most orderly: the conch is an almost religious symbol, designed to unite people together and make them respect one another. It's also worth noting that Piggy, not Ralph, is the one who first considers using the shell to call the other boys, and yet Piggy wants *Ralph* to blow the shell. Piggy, we could say, is the intellectual advisor--wise, intelligent, but not really a leader. Ralph, on the other hand, is the principled leader--not particularly brilliant, but smart enough to listen to his advisors.

## Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ "He says he saw the beastie, the snake-thing, and will it come back tonight?"

"But there isn't a beastie!"


"He says in the morning it turned into them things like ropes in the trees and hung in the branches. He says will it come back again tonight?"

"But there isn't a beastie!"

There was no laughter at all now and more grave watching. Ralph pushed both hands through his hair and looked at the little boy in mixed amusement and exasperation.

**Related Characters:** Ralph, Piggy (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 36

**Explanation and Analysis**



In this passage, one of the small boys who's been trapped on the island asks Ralph--who's just been elected the leader of the island--what he's going to do about the "beastie." The small boy--probably no more than 5 or 6 years old--is terrified of the beastie, and wants Ralph to fight it.

It's important to note a few things. First, the passage sets a clear contrast between order and civilization, symbolized by Ralph and his conch, and anarchy, symbolized by the fear of the vague, formless beastie. For the time being, the boys either don't believe the beastie exists (Ralph, the rationalist, dismisses it altogether), or they think of it as an external thing--a literal monster to be avoided or slain. As we'll see later on, however the beastie is actually a more abstract, psychological opponent.


Finally, it's interesting to note that the little boy isn't speaking directly--he's actually using Piggy as a correspondent when addressing Ralph. Piggy, the intellectual of the group, is something of a spokesman for society's problems: it's his job to listen to the "little guy" and plead his case before the authorities (i.e., Ralph).

●● Ralph waved the conch.  
"Shut up! Wait! Listen!"

He went on in the silence, borne on in his triumph.  
"There's another thing. We can help them to find us. If a ship comes near the island they may not notice us. So we must make smoke on top of the mountain. We must make a fire."  
"A fire! Make a fire!"

**Related Characters:** Ralph (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 38

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Ralph--newly elected the leader of the boys--proposes a solution to the boys' most important problem. Trapped on the island, the boys need a way to escape. Thus, Ralph proposes building a large fire that can send out a smoke signal, visible for miles in every direction.

Notice that while every one of the boys seems enthusiastic about building the fire, most seem more interested in the fire itself than in using it be rescued. Fire itself is a complex symbol of both order and chaos. Fire is the quintessential human invention (see the legend of Prometheus, for instance), but it's also the quintessential symbol of


destruction and chaos. Ralph and his peers on the island have the potential to use fire for good--to make a smoke signal--or to use it to destroy each other and the entire island. It remains to be seen how the group will use fire, but the boys' overly enthusiastic, mob-like attitude doesn't bode well.

## Chapter 4 Quotes

●● Roger stooped, picked up a stone, aimed, and threw it at Henry -- threw it to miss. The stone, that token of preposterous time, bounded five yards to Henry's right and fell in the water. Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law.

**Related Characters:** Roger, Henry

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 62



### Explanation and Analysis

In this scene, we meet a boy named Roger, who becomes one of the novel's antagonists. Here Roger picks up a handful of stones and begins throwing them--he's just blowing off steam; in short, being a kid. Roger then notices a younger boy named Henry. Although Roger is throwing stones and trying to scare or intimidate Henry, he's careful not to actually *hit* Henry. As Golding makes clear, Roger doesn't try to hit Henry because he's been well-trained by civilization: all of society is built on the idea that people are *supposed* to not be able to hurt each other with impunity.

It's important to note that Golding never once mentions Roger's *natural* inclination to be respectful and kind. While some people argue that humans are naturally good and loving, Golding suggests just the opposite. As he sees it, the only thing that can keep human destructiveness in check is civilization: precisely the combination of "parents and school and policemen" that the passage mentions.

●● "Kill the pig! Cut her throat! Spill her blood!"

**Related Characters:** Jack (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 69

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the boys on the island unite together as they hunt for food. Although the purpose of the hunt is very straightforward--kill a pig so that the boys have food to eat--something happens during the course of the hunt. The boys seem to unite together in their pursuit of the pig: they become one mind, one body--a mob.

The passage is important because it exemplifies the distinction between the Dionysian and Apollonian states of mind (ideas from the philosophy of Nietzsche, and based on the Ancient Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus). Ralph wants to live in an Apollonian society--a society of order, rules, and individuality. Jack, however, wants to embrace the Dionysian--to live in a world of brutality, chaos, and mob mentality. The hunt for the pig can certainly be interpreted either as an Apollonian event (an event with a clear purpose: find food) or a Dionysian event (an event designed to build unity and encourage the boys to embrace violence). Here, though, the Dionysian side of the hunt seems to be winning.

☞ His mind was crowded with memories; memories of the knowledge that had come to them when they closed in on the struggling pig, knowledge that they had outwitted a living thing, imposed their will upon it, taken away its life like a long satisfying drink.

**Related Characters:** Jack

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 70

### Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Golding offers us a window into Jack's inner thoughts. Jack is a violent, bullying boy, who seems to savor any opportunity to dominate other people. In this passage, we learn that Jack enjoys hunting the pig--not because he wants to eat, but because he enjoys the feeling of dominating another being and taking away its life.

Jack's thoughts might seem violent or brutal, and yet they're an undeniable part of what it means to be a human being. In other words, Jack exemplifies the dangers of civilization. There will always be people like Jack leading society: people who pretend to be calm, rational leaders, but


who in reality enjoy leadership because it allows them to control others. (It's worth remembering that Jack was a prefect at his school in England--it's easy to imagine him sadistically disciplining other students and enjoying every minute of it.)

## Chapter 5 Quotes

☞ What I mean is... Maybe it's only us...

**Related Characters:** Simon (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 89

### Explanation and Analysis

In this section, we meet Simon, a shy, young boy who nonetheless seems preternaturally wise (and a kind of Christ-figure, as we later see). Simon and the other boys on the island are talking, once again, about the beast--the mysterious monster that supposedly endangers the boys' lives. While most of the boys believe that the beast is an external object, Simon suggests that it's actually a product of the boys' imagination.

It's important to understand what Simon means. Simon *isn't* saying that the boys are hallucinating or imagining the beast. Rather, he's suggesting that the greatest dangers on the island (the greatest source of violence and destruction) isn't a beast at all--it's the boys themselves. From what we've already seen, Simon has a point: the boys kill animals, hurt each other, set the trees on fire, and generally destroy everything in their path. The boys exemplify man's capacity to destroy, and to enjoy destruction--and this is the real "beast" that Simon alludes to.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

☞ The spear moved forward inch by inch and the terrified squealing became a high-pitched scream. Then Jack found the throat and the hot blood spouted over his hands. The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her.

**Related Characters:** Jack

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 135

### Explanation and Analysis


In this passage, Jack engages in another hunt--one that's depicted in heavily sexualized language. Jack and his followers pursue a pig, but not just any pig--a sow (i.e., a female pig). By any rational measure, it's a bad idea for Jack to kill a sow--if the boys want to eat, then they should let the sow live to give birth to more pigs. But of course, Jack and his followers aren't entirely concerned with eating, or any other practical issue for that matter. They want to savor the feeling of murder.

Jack's killing is presented as a sexual act: he thrusts a phallic spear into the female pig, followed by a burst of bodily fluids, and finally, a tired, heavy "fulfillment." Golding, a Freudian, associates sex and aggression: they're two sides of the same savage, brutal, yet quintessentially human coin. In short, the scene exemplifies everything irrational and violent about human nature--everything that Ralph is trying, unsuccessfully, to eliminate from his island society.

☝ There isn't anyone to help you. Only me. And I'm the Beast... Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!... You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are the way they are?

**Related Characters:** Simon

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 143

### Explanation and Analysis

In this dreamlike scene, Simon hallucinates an encounter with "the Beast." At first, Simon notices the sight of a pig's head on a stick, covered in flies. As he falls into a trance state, Simon finds himself talking to the pig's head. The head claims that *it* is the Beast to which the other boys have been alluding all along. Strangely, the Beast claims that it was foolish for the other boys to believe that it was an external object, one that could be hunted and killed.

The passage confirms what Simon had already suspected--the supposed "beast" isn't a living animal at all; it's the collective spirit of the boys' violence and brutality, the potential for evil and savagery that lives inside all humans. Jack and his followers have discovered something within

themselves--a strong desire to hurt and kill. This desire, which is uniquely human, yet suppressed within most of human society, is precisely what the pig's head embodies.

The paradox of this passage is that although the Beast insists that it's not a material *thing* at all, it *is* a material thing in the passage--it's a head on a stick. It would be a huge mistake to take the passage too literally. Simon is horrified by the sight of the pig's head, but he understands that the head itself is only a form that the Beast takes in his imagination. In reality, the Beast has no form whatsoever--it's the "heart of darkness" that lies inside all human beings.

## Chapter 12 Quotes

☝ What did it mean? A stick sharpened at both ends. What was there in that?

**Related Characters:** Ralph (speaker)

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 191

### Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, Ralph prepares to be hunted down by Jack and his gang of boys. Shortly before he's to be hunted, Ralph crosses paths with Samneric, who have been forced to join Jack, but don't respect him at all. Samneric tell Ralph that Jack is sharpening a stick at both ends. Although Ralph has no idea what this means, it's suggested that Jack is planning to cut off Ralph's head and "sacrifice" it to the Beast, much as he did with the pig earlier in the novel.

As the passage suggests, Jack's society is a dark mirror-image of the one Ralph founded at the beginning of the novel. Where Ralph's society was based on reason, free speech, and practicality, Jack's society is based on murder, brutality, and bloodshed. And yet both societies "work" in the same way: they're organized around a central figure (Ralph, Jack), who's armed with a barrage of symbols (for Ralph, the conch; for Jack, the pig's head and Ralph's head). As Jack sees it, there is no right or wrong in the world. His society is based on one thing: power. Jack will hunt down Ralph and kill him to cement his power and create a new symbol of his power.



●● His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.

**Related Characters:** Ralph, Piggy

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:**   

**Page Number:** 202

### Explanation and Analysis

In the final chapter of *Lord of the Flies*, the boys are faced with a surprising rescue. Confronted with a grown-up for the first time in weeks, the boys suddenly realize how far they've fallen. In no time at all, the boys have become

bloodthirsty murderers, savoring murder and violence of all kinds. The evidence of their barbarism is visible everywhere--their island itself is in ruins, burning to ashes by fire.

Confronted with the misery of his situation, Ralph has no choice but to cry. He can see very clearly what has gone wrong: Piggy has been killed; his peers have tried to murder him, etc. But Ralph goes further, weeping for the general savagery of humankind. The quotation is important, then, because Golding uses it to make explicit what he'd previously implied: the children's experiences on the island are a metaphor for humanity itself. If innocent, "pure" children, left to their own devices, are capable of murdering each other, then humanity as a whole is hopelessly destructive, too. The fact that *children* are capable of such destruction suggests that there is always innate evil in the human soul--the only thing that can save the human race from its own "heart of darkness" is civilization, grounded in reason, law, and respect.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

An English schoolboy of about twelve years old explores a jungle. A second boy soon joins the first. The first boy is tall, handsome, and athletic. The second is fat and wears glasses. The boys discuss what happened and how they got to the jungle. They're fairly sure the plane they were in was shot down and crash landed on an **island**, and that all the **adults** on the plane were killed. They wonder if any of the other schoolboys on the flight survived.

The fat boy asks the tall boy his name. The tall boy answers, Ralph. But instead of asking the fat boy's name, Ralph wanders off. The fat boy follows, but can barely keep up because of his asthma. When the fat boy starts eating some fruit, Ralph slips away and finds a beautiful beach.

Eventually the fat boy finds Ralph and proposes they call a meeting and make a list of everyone who survived. He lets slip that in school people called him Piggy. Ralph laughs. Piggy begs Ralph not to tell anyone.

The boys keep exploring. Ralph finds a perfect swimming hole and says his **father**, who's in the Navy, will come rescue them. But Piggy is fairly certain that no one knows where they landed. Piggy says they have to do something. Just then, Ralph spots a huge **conch** shell. Piggy realizes they can use it as a trumpet. Piggy can't blow it himself, because of his asthma, but shows Ralph how to do it. Ralph blows, and a huge blast sounds.

All the boys gather on the beach: they range in age from six to twelve. There's one set of twins, Sam and Eric. A group of the older boys are members of a choir, dressed in black. Their leader is Jack, a redhead who tries to take control of the meeting. One of the boys in the choir, Simon, faints. Jack soon tells Piggy to shut up, and calls him "Fatty." Ralph gleefully reveals that Piggy's name is "Piggy." Everyone laughs, humiliating Piggy.

The boys decide to vote for a leader. Everyone in the choir votes for Jack, but all the other boys vote for Ralph because he blew the **conch**. To keep Jack happy, Ralph says that the choir will be hunters and Jack will lead them.

*The boys are nameless. Names are a product of society, which the boys have now left. The island is a paradise not just because it's lush and beautiful, but also because it's a blank slate on which the supposedly innocent boys can build something new.*



*Ralph ignores the fat boy because the boy is fat and weak. Even in paradise, human nature is prejudiced against weakness.*



*Piggy, the weak boy, tries to win the friendship of Ralph, the strong boy. Piggy's desperation only makes him seem more weak.*



*Though weak, Piggy is smarter than Ralph. He comes up with the idea for the meeting and using the conch. By blowing the conch, Ralph and Piggy both become civilizing forces: they organize the boys to figure out what to do.*



*The meeting is Piggy's effort to build a "civilization," but already Jack seeks to take over by mocking Piggy. Ralph plays along, wanting to seem strong. Fainting spells like Simon's were once considered signs of a spiritual connection to higher powers.*



*As the conch-blower, Ralph symbolizes civilization. But Ralph realizes he must keep Jack happy: civilization makes a deal with savagery.*



Ralph decides the boys must explore their island. He and Jack will both go, of course. Ralph ignores Piggy's whining pleas to be included, and picks Simon to be the third explorer. Ralph, Jack, and Simon have a great time exploring, and stop to push a huge boulder off a cliff, which seems to them like a great accomplishment.

The boys climb to the highest peak on the island, which they call the mountain, from where they can see that they're on an uninhabited **island**. They also see the "**scar**" where the crashing plane tore through the jungle. Ralph says of the island, "This belongs to us."

Soon the boys head back down the mountain to the beach. On the way, they spot a wild pig caught in vines. Jack pulls out his pocket knife, but pauses before striking, and the pig escapes. Jack vows not to hesitate next time.

## CHAPTER 2

Back at the beach, Ralph blows the **conch** to call another meeting. Ralph announces that they're on an uninhabited **island**. Jack interrupts to say that they still need an army in order to hunt pigs.

Ralph says that without **adults**, they'll have to take care of themselves. He makes a rule that whoever holds the **conch** at meetings gets to speak.

Jack, excited, shouts out that they can make more rules and punish whoever breaks them.

Piggy takes the **conch** and says no one knows they're on the **island**. Ralph agrees, but describes the island as a good place where they'll have fun even if they have to stay for a long time.

A nervous little boy with a birthmark that covers half his face steps forward. After some prodding, the boy whispers to Piggy, and Piggy tells everyone what the boy said. He saw a "**beastie**," a "snake-thing," the previous night in the woods. Ralph and the older boys dismiss this "beastie" as just a nightmare, but the younger boys seem scared. Jack grabs the **conch** and says there's no snake-thing. If there is, he adds, his hunters will find and kill it. Ralph also says there's no snake-thing.

*The three boys who symbolize civilization, savagery, and spirituality all go to explore the island together. As of now, all three are united.*



*Ralph claims the island for civilization. But in doing so he also claims the scar, the symbol of the savagery that exists in human nature.*



*Jack's still too "civilized" to kill the pig. But the sight of the pig sparks his savage desire to dominate anything that lives.*



*Jack needs to be in control: he interrupts Ralph to demonstrate his importance.*



*The boys' first law is focused on the conch and made by Ralph.*



*Jack likes law only because he likes to punish.*



*Only Piggy sees the big picture. Ralph and the other boys focus on short term pleasure and fun.*



*The beast's first appearance. It symbolizes the evil in human nature. Jack, the symbol of savagery, says the beast doesn't exist but also that his hunters will kill it. He uses the beast to make himself more powerful. Ralph, the symbol of civilization, just denies that the beast exists.*



Ralph says he's confident they boys will be rescued. He suggests they build a **fire** on the mountaintop to alert rescuers.

*Fire leads to rescue, which leads back to civilization.*



Excited by the idea of building a **fire**, the boys jump up and run to collect wood and bring it to the mountain top. Piggy, left alone at the meeting place, disgustedly says that the other boys are acting like a bunch of kids.

*Civilized and intelligent, Piggy prefers organized plans to short-sighted "fun."*



The boys make a pile of dead wood on the mountain. They can't figure out how start the fire until Jack grabs the **glasses** off Piggy's face. Ralph uses the glasses to focus the sun's rays on the wood. Piggy is terrified, nearly blind without his glasses.

*Piggy's glasses symbolize technology, mankind's ability to harness nature to build tools. Here the boys use technology to help their return to civilization.*



The **fire** burns out because the wood is so dry. Piggy starts to criticize the boys, but Jack shouts him down. Simon points out that Piggy's **glasses** made the fire possible.

*The rivalry between the savage (Jack) and intellectual (Piggy) intensifies. Note also Simon's generosity.*



Ralph says they have to keep the **fire** burning every day without fail. Jack volunteers himself and his hunters to do the job.

*Jack takes on keeping the boys linked to civilization.. This seems like a bad fit.*



Piggy notices that sparks from their signal **fire** have set the trees below them on fire. He argues that instead of running off to start a fire they should have first made shelters. The other boys shout at him again, but are disturbed. Piggy asks where the boy with the birthmark who saw the "**beastie**" is. No one knows.

*Though they know Piggy's right, the other boys still gang up on him. The boy who saw the "beastie" was actually killed, symbolically, by the beast: the boys' savage desire to have "fun."*



## CHAPTER 3

It's weeks later. In the deep silence of the jungle, Jack tracks a pig and hurls his spear at it. As usual, he misses. Jack returns to the beach, frustrated and angry.

*Jack becomes obsessed with killing a pig, but some shred of civilization still holds him back.*



On the beach, Ralph and Simon are building huts. Ralph is frustrated because only he and Simon are working on the huts, which are falling apart. He complains to Jack that everyone else is off playing or hunting.

*Savagery confronts civilization: as Jack hunts, Ralph builds shelters. Note that only Simon helps Ralph build the huts.*



Ralph's complaint offends Jack. Ralph points out that all the hunters except Jack came back hours ago, and are now swimming and playing. Jack tries to explain his obsession with catching and killing a pig, but can't find the words.

*The instinct toward savagery cannot be conveyed in words. Language is a product of the civilization that Jack is abandoning.*



Ralph and Jack argue whether hunting is as important as building shelters.

Ralph says they need shelters because many of the boys are scared. Simon observes that it is as if the **island** is bad, not the good island Ralph described in Chapter 2. Jack agrees. While hunting in the jungle, he says, he often feels like he's the one who's being hunted.

Ralph puts the focus of the conversation back on getting rescued. He mentions Jack and the hunter's responsibility for the **fire**, which causes another argument. Jack claims hunting is work. Ralph shouts that while Jack likes hunting, he's stuck building shelters for the good of everyone, not for pleasure. They go for a swim that just barely manages to cool down their anger.

Simon slips away into the forest. He helps some of the younger boys gather fruit, then finds a beautiful glade hidden by creeper vines. He sneaks inside and contemplates the island's sights and sounds in a kind of spiritual meditation.

## CHAPTER 4

The boys adjust to life on the **island**. The younger boys are now called "littluns." The older boys are "biguns." The littluns generally play all day and become terrified at night.

As three littluns play in the sand, two biguns, Maurice and Roger, emerge from the forest. Maurice heads off to swim, but Roger stays behind. When one of the littluns, Henry, wanders off, Roger follows him. Henry plays at the edge of the **ocean**, happily controlling the movements of the little animals living there.

Roger watches Henry from a distance, and finds some nuts blown from a tree. After a pause, Roger throws the nuts and then some stones at Henry, but he purposely aims to miss by a few feet.

Jack emerges from the forest and calls to Roger, telling him to follow. In the jungle, Jack paints his own face for hunting camouflage. The mask makes him feel liberated: Jack begins dancing and snarling. He gets Roger, Samneric, and some others to come hunt with him.

*Savagery again clashes with civilization.*



*Simon's sense of the island is mystical, as if it's haunted. Jack, a hunter, feels hunted himself. But the boys have yet to figure out what is haunting the island.*



*Civilized Ralph builds shelters out of necessity. Civilization suppresses the desire to "have fun" by making people feel shame for not acting responsibly. Successful societies suppress the beast, but never destroy it.*



*Unlike the civilized Ralph, Simon enjoys building shelters. Unlike the savage Jack, Simon is perfectly comfortable and unafraid in the jungle.*



*For now, the beast exists in the boys' nightmares, but it will soon enter their conscious minds.*



*Though quite young, Henry shows the innate savage love of dominance and power as he enjoys controlling animals smaller than he is.*



*Roger treats Henry as Henry treats the animals. Roger wants to go further, to actually hurt Henry, but civilization holds him back.*



*Jack's mask shields him from civilization's hold, stripping him of his civilized identity, making him anonymous and free from shame.*





On the beach, a bunch of biguns, including Ralph and Piggy, rest and talk. Soon Piggy comes up with a plan for them to build sundials so they'll know the time. The other boys laugh at him: his obesity, glasses, and asthma make him an outsider.

*Jack hunts pigs to feel strong and part of a group. "Civilized" boys pick on Piggy for the same reason: it's human nature.*



Suddenly Ralph spots smoke on the horizon—it's a ship! Everyone looks at the mountain, but there's no smoke from their signal fire. They run to the mountaintop and discover the **fire** is dead and the ship has passed. Below them they see a procession of hunters carrying a pig on a spit and chanting, "Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood." The hunters come up to the mountaintop. Jack, not realizing what's happened, is triumphant after killing the pig. Furious, Ralph tells Jack about the ship. Jack responds defensively: he says he needed more hunters to circle the pig.

*Savagery and civilization clash in the open for the first time. Jack chooses to hunt over tending the fire. His choice has devastating consequences: a ship and the prospect of rescue pass. Jack has decided that rescue (civilization) is not as important to him as hunting (savagery), while Ralph has clearly taken the other side.*



Piggy and even some of the hunters start yelling at Jack. Jack, humiliated and angry, hits Piggy. Piggy's **glasses** fly off, breaking a lens. Jack mocks Piggy and everyone laughs.

*When he feels most vulnerable, Jack abuses a victim weaker than he to regain his authority.*



Eventually Jack apologizes for letting the **fire** die. Ralph asks Piggy's permission to use his **glasses** to light the fire. Ralph realizes he and Piggy have become allies.

*The boys take sides: Ralph and Piggy favor rescue and civilization, while Jack favors hunting and savagery.*



They cook the pig, but Jack refuses to give Piggy any meat. Simon shares with Piggy.

*Simon is generous and not in conflict with anyone.*



Jack and his boys begin to reenact the killing of the pig in a kind of ritual dance. Ralph announces that he's calling an assembly and walks away.

*Ralph interrupts the savage ritual dance by calling a meeting, a symbol of civilization.*



## CHAPTER 5

Ralph paces the beach, planning what he'll say at the meeting and wishing he could think as well as Piggy can. Finally, he blows the **conch**.

*Ralph is no longer blinded by Piggy's weakness.*



Everyone gathers and listens to Ralph. He explains that the meeting is about setting things straight, not fun. He points out all the things they said they'd do, but didn't: store water, build shelters, keep the signal **fire** going. He says the fire is the most important thing on the **island**.

*Civilization involves planning and work, not fun. It's the force that suppresses mankind's savage inclination to pursue short term pleasures, like hunting.*



Jack stands and reaches for the **conch** so he can talk. But Ralph refuses to hand it over and Jack sits back down.

*Jack's actions show he still respects the rules of the boys' civilization.*



Ralph observes that people are becoming afraid. He doesn't know why, but he thinks they should discuss their fear to overcome it. Jack takes the **conch**. He calls the littleun's crybabies. He says he's been all over the island, and there's no **beast**. Piggy agrees with Jack.

*Both the civilized (Piggy) and the savage (Jack) continue to deny the existence of the beast.*



A littleun named Phil stands up and says he saw the **beast** in the forest the previous night. To everyone's shock, Simon says the boy probably just saw him—Simon went walking in the forest that night.

*Only Simon would even consider walking into the forest alone at night. Only Simon knows there's nothing to fear.*



Another littleun stands and identifies himself as Percival Wemys Madison. He gives his London address, and tries to give his telephone number, but can't remember it and begins to cry.

*Percival's only remaining connections to civilization are his name and address. Civilization is slowly receding.*



When Percival recovers his voice, he tells the other boys that the **beast** comes from the **sea**. This idea terrifies the boys.

*The ocean symbolizes the unconscious. So Percival's claim is accurate.*



Simon takes the **conch**. He says maybe the boys themselves are the **beast**. Piggy thinks this idea is crazy. Many of the boys think Simon's saying the beast is a ghost. Ralph holds a vote on whether the boys believe in ghosts. A majority raises their hands.

*Simon reveals the truth. But Piggy, the most civilized boy, can't accept it. The conflict brings the boys to a hopeless standstill.*



Piggy grabs the **conch** and shouts that ghosts don't exist. He asks the boys if they're humans or savages? He mentions the hunters letting the **fire** go out. Jack furiously rips the conch from him.

*Civilized and savage blame each other for the subconscious fear they both feel: that the beast lies within them.*



Ralph accuses Jack of breaking the rules. Jack questions Ralph's leadership. He says he doesn't care about the rules, that he'll hunt the **beast** and kill it. He starts a chant on the beach. Everyone but Ralph, Piggy, and Simon join him.

*Jack breaks with civilization. Earlier, Ralph stopped a ritual dance by calling a meeting. Now Jack stops the meeting by starting a ritual dance.*



Piggy tells Ralph to blow the **conch**, but Ralph refuses. What if no one responded? Ralph considers stepping down as chief, but Piggy protests. He says everything would descend into chaos, and then Jack would target Piggy.

*Ralph knows civilization's hold is slipping, and fears breaking it completely. Piggy realizes that doing nothing will allow Jack (savagery) to prevail.*



The three boys wish **adults** were around to make everything better. Ralph wishes the adults would at least send them a sign.

*To the boys, adults represent civilization.*



## CHAPTER 6

That night, airplanes battle in the night sky, high and far enough away that none of the boys wake. A dead pilot from one of the destroyed planes drifts down on a parachute and lands on the mountain top next to the signal fire.

*A sign from the adult world arrives. But it's a dead soldier, signalling that adult "civilization" also hides savagery within.*



Samneric are on fire duty on the mountain top, but they are asleep. When they wake in the early morning before dawn, they see the dead pilot in the shadows. It sits up and falls down when the wind catches the parachute, which they think are wings. They run to the beach in terror to tell the others that the **beast** chased them down the mountain.

*The sign from the adult world is the beast. The beast has put out the signal fire, which is the boys' last link to civilization.*



Ralph calls a meeting that quickly becomes heated. Jack questions Ralph's decisions and leadership, mocks Piggy, and claims the **conch** no longer matters. For an instant it seems as if Jack might take over leadership of the boys, but Ralph turns the tables and wins everyone to his side by asking if they want to be rescued or not.

*The beast makes the boys crave a strong leader, giving Jack more weight. At the same time, most of the boys still favor rescue and civilization over savagery.*



Ralph and the biguns agree to search the **island**. Piggy stays behind to look after the littleuns. At the far tip of the island, the biguns find a rock formation Jack calls the "castle." The rock is accessible only by a piece of stone forty feet above the water below. They think it might be the **beast's** hideout. Ralph, as the leader, volunteers to search it. Jack follows behind him.

*Jack follows Ralph to appear strong and undaunted in the eyes of other boys. He can't allow Ralph to upstage him and thereby appear to be the more courageous and deserving leader.*



The boys find no **beast**, but Jack is excited because the rock protects a cave and would make a terrific fort. It even has boulders, which, if pushed in the right way, could roll down to crush approaching enemies.

*In Chapter 1, the boys move a boulder in fellowship. Now Jack is excited to use boulders to kill.*



Jack and the other biguns want to stay and play at the fort, but Ralph says they have to go search the mountain for the beast and relight the signal **fire**.

*The other boys want to "have fun," Ralph wants to rebuild civilization in the form of the signal fire.*



## CHAPTER 7

While resting on the hike to the mountain, Ralph wishes he could cut his hair, clip his nails, and get cleaned up. Remembering his past in England, he stares at the **ocean** and thinks how big it is and how it separates the boys from civilization. Simon seems to read Ralph's mind, and reassures him. "You'll get back alright," he says.

A while later as they head through the jungle toward the mountain, the boys find signs of pigs. Ralph agrees that as long as they're going in the right direction, they can hunt. Soon, they come upon a wild boar. The boar gets away, but not before Ralph hits it in the side with a spear. Flushed with pride, Ralph reenacts the hunt with a bigun named Robert. Soon all the boys are involved, chanting "Kill the pig. Cut its throat." For a brief, moment, it seems like they might actually kill Robert.

The boys finally stop and discuss how to do the dance properly. Maurice suggests a drum and **fire**. Robert says they need to use a real pig next time, so they can really kill it. Jack suggests they use a littleun. All the other boys laugh.

Darkness falls before they reach the mountain. Ralph realizes that they need to send someone to tell Piggy they won't be back that night. Everyone's too frightened to volunteer, except Simon.

Jack mocks Ralph's concern for Piggy. Ralph asks Jack why he hates him. The question makes all the boys nervous.

At the base of the mountain, the boys stop for the night. But Jack questions Ralph's courage, and so Ralph agrees to climb right then. Only Roger agrees to accompany them. Halfway up the mountain, Ralph decides it's foolish to go up in the dark. Jack insists on going ahead as Ralph and Roger wait behind. A few minutes later Jack returns saying he saw something. The three boys climb the mountain to the peak, blinded by darkness. The wind blows. The parachutist sits up. The boys run for it.

## CHAPTER 8

Back on the beach, Piggy can't believe the **beast** is real. He asks what they should do. Ralph isn't sure. He says the beast is sitting up by the signal **fire** as if trying to intercept their rescue.

*The ocean symbolizes the subconscious, where the beast lurks; it does separate Ralph from civilization. Note that Simon predicts only Ralph's safe return, not his own.*



*Ralph's excitement at killing the shows that even he has a savage side to him, though it's more repressed. The ritual dance gains in power, almost killing Robert and foreshadowing future trouble.*



*All the boys' suggestions, from drums to human sacrifice, would make the dance more "savage," and foreshadow more violence.*



*Only Simon understands that the beast is within. He doesn't fear the jungle because the beast isn't there.*



*People are uncomfortable facing questions that hint at the beast within.*



*The conflict between Jack (savagery) and Ralph (civilization) for control and power serves only the beast's benefit. Here Jack and his savagery prevail, luring the boys deeper into believing in the beasts' physical existence.*



*The intellectual Piggy can't fathom the beast's existence. Ralph considers the beast an enemy of civilization and rescue.*



Jack says his hunters could kill the **beast**. Ralph says they're just boys with sticks. Infuriated, Jack blows the **conch** to call a meeting. Ralph begins to talk but Jack says he called the meeting with the conch, so he should get to speak. Ralph lets him. Jack says they've seen the beast: it's a hunter.

Next Jack accuses Ralph of belittling the hunters. He says Ralph is like Piggy and isn't a proper chief. Jack calls for a vote to remove Ralph and make Jack chief. Nobody votes for Jack.

Jack storms off, humiliated and crying. He vows to form a new group, and says anyone can join him when he hunts. He disappears into the forest. Everyone is stunned, but the meeting continues. Simon suggests they climb the mountain. Piggy considers the suggestion insane. He says they should just build a signal **fire** on the beach.

The boys build the fire and the littleuns dance and sing. After the fire, Ralph realizes that all the biguns but Samneric and Piggy have disappeared. Most have gone to join Jack.

Simon has wandered alone into the forest. He enters a secret glade and sits there in the sun. Though he gets thirstier and thirstier, he continues to sit.

Elsewhere in the jungle, Jack declares himself chief of the boys who have joined him. As chief, he says he's going to get more "biguns away from the **conch**." He also says that when his tribe hunts they'll leave some of the kill for the **beast**. That way, it won't bother them. Jack leads the boys into the forest.

The boys track, corner, and kill a big sow (a female pig). Jack cuts off its head. He decides they'll raid Ralph's camp for **fire** to cook the pig, and invite everyone to a feast. Roger, meanwhile, sharpens a stick at both ends. They stake the pig head on the stick and leave it as an offering to the **beast**.

Simon witnesses the killing and staking of the pig from his secret spot in the glade. Simon is thirsty and exhausted, and the pig's head seems to talk to him. It tells him to leave and go back to the others. He stares at the pig's head, at the **Lord of the Flies**, and seems to recognize it.

Jack emerges from the forest into Ralph's camp. As his followers steal **fire** from the signal fire, he invites Ralph's group to come his feast, then disappears.

*By blowing the conch to call a meeting, Jack shows he's still playing by civilization's rules. Note that Jack links himself and his boys to the beast by calling it a hunter.*



*The boys' allegiance still remains with civilization and order. They're unwilling to surrender to savagery...so far.*



*Jack (savagery) forms his own tribe outside civilization. Simon (spirituality) suggests they confront the beast. Piggy (civilization) strives to find a way to ignore and hide from the beast.*



*A turning point: publicly the biguns are unwilling to oppose civilization, but privately they choose Jack, the beast, and savagery.*



*Like other religious mystics, Simon fasts and meditates.*



*Jack now treats the beast like a god. The other boys' fear of the beast increases their loyalty to Jack. Savage chiefs both fear the beast and use it to gain power.*



*Jack and his tribe decide to attack Ralph's civilization. Their offering makes clear that to them the beast is now a god who demands sacrifice.*



*Simon recognizes that the offering to the beast actually is the beast. In trying to appease the beast by sacrificing to it, Jack's tribe is actually making the beast more powerful.*



*The purpose of fire has changed from rescue to cooking for survival.*





Simon is on the verge of having a fit in the forest. The pig's head, the **Lord of the Flies**, speaks to him: "I'm the Beast ... You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?" As Simon descends into a faint, the Lord of the Flies says, "We are going to have fun on this island!" The beast warns Simon that if he tries to interfere Jack, Roger, Maurice, Robert, Bill, Piggy, and Ralph will "do" him.

*The beast links itself to "fun" (savagery) and confirms it exists within men. The beast's threat is surprising: it says Piggy and Ralph will act with Jack and his tribe to kill Simon. The beast claims both civilization and savagery as allies against Simon's spiritual truth.*



## CHAPTER 9

Simon wakes as a storm gathers over the island. He climbs the mountain even though he's staggering with exhaustion. He sees the **"beast"** and realizes that it's just a dead parachutist. He untangles the cords holding the parachutist in place, and heads down the mountain to tell the others.

*Simon goes to the mountaintop, a symbolic journey, and learns the truth. Like other religious figures, Simon then seeks to spread his enlightenment to others.*



Meanwhile, everyone but a few littleuns and Ralph and Piggy have gone to Jack's feast. Ralph mocks the feast as a bunch of boys "pretending" to act like a tribe. But the lure of food proves too much for Piggy, who suggests they go to the feast "to make sure nothing happens."

*Piggy is betrayed by his stomach: he wants meat. But Piggy tries to hide his savage desire for food by making up "civilized" excuses for attending the feast.*



Jack acts like a savage chief at the feast. His face is painted and he wears a crown of leaves. Jack commands and the other boys obey him.

*The boys have traded freedom for the security of an all-powerful ruler.*



When Ralph arrives, Jack asks the gathered boys who will join his tribe. Ralph says that he's still chief and has the **conch**, but Jack says the conch has no authority on this side of the island.

*Jack claims to be beyond the conch's (civilization's) reach. He's become a savage.*



It starts to rain, and Ralph laughs that Jack's tribe had no foresight to build shelters. In response, Jack whips the group into "their dance." They form a chanting circle: "Kill the beast! Cut his throat!" Roger pretends to be a pig at the center of the circle, but eventually stops. Even Ralph and Piggy press forward. The circle of boys becomes a frenzied mob.

*Civilization creates security by building protective shelters. Savages do the same by forming mobs that allow individuals to forget their fears. Both strategies involve hiding from fear, from the beast within.*



Suddenly, Simon staggers from the forest, shouting the news about the dead parachutist. In their frenzied dance, though, the other boys think that *he's* the **beast**. They surround him, and beat and claw him to death. The rain pours down. Wind lifts the parachutist and sails it toward the boys, who run screaming. Simon's body washes out to sea.

*The Lord of the Flies' prediction comes true: all the boys murder Simon. Like Jesus Christ, he was killed while trying to deliver the spiritual truth.*



## CHAPTER 10

The next morning, Piggy and Ralph discover that every bigun except them and Samneric has joined Jack's tribe. Ralph tells Piggy that the "**beast**" that came out of the forest was Simon, and that they murdered him. Piggy screams that it was an accident. When Samneric show up, all four boys pretend they left the feast early, before the dance.

Jack moves his tribe to Castle Rock. He orders his savages to post a guard and beat anyone who disobeys or displeases him. Jack says that the thing that crawled out of the forest the previous night was the **beast**. But he says that they didn't kill it, because it's impossible for *them* to ever kill it.

Jack says they'll go hunting tomorrow and have a feast. To cook the meat, they'll raid Ralph's group for Piggy's **glasses**. Meanwhile, Ralph, Piggy, and Samneric discover four people aren't enough to keep the **fire** going. They decide to keep it burning only during the day. That night, Jack and his hunters attack while everyone is asleep. Ralph and Eric beat each other up, and Piggy protects the **conch**, while Jack steals Piggy's glasses.

## CHAPTER 11

Though only Piggy, Ralph, and Samneric remain in their group, Piggy tells Ralph to blow the **conch** to call an assembly. He does. They decide to go to Castle Rock. Piggy plans to ask Jack to give back his glasses because "what's right's right." Ralph, Sam, and Eric decide to carry spears, but Piggy insists on holding only the conch.

At Castle Rock, Ralph blows the **conch**. Roger throws a rock, though he purposely misses the twins and the other savages remain quiet.

Jack appears from the forest behind Ralph's group, followed by hunters carrying a pig on a spit. Ralph calls Jack a thief. Jack attacks him. The two boys fight, but only with the sides of the spears, and soon wear themselves out.

Ralph demands that Jack return Piggy's **glasses**. He mentions again the importance of the signal **fire**. Jack's tribe has only a cooking fire, he points out. In response, Jack orders his hunters to surround and tie up Samneric. He says to Ralph, "See? They do what I want."

*The "civilized" boys can't admit their part in Simon's murder. Civilization exists to suppress and hide from the savage instincts, the "beast" within, that made them kill.*



*Jack claims Simon was the Beast, but denies they actually killed it. If they'd killed the beast, why would the tribe need him to be chief?*



*The "civilized" boys stop trying to keep the signal fire burning at night: a symbolic surrender to savagery. The savages, meanwhile, are willing to give up the chance at rescue completely to get the technology of Piggy's glasses to build cooking fires.*



*Piggy literally holds on to civilization (the conch). His civilized argument based on "what's right" ignores the savage rule of dominance by the strong.*



*Civilization still has a hold on Roger.*



*Civilization confronts savagery head on, but not completely: the boys aren't really trying to kill each other...yet.*



*Ralph emphasizes the importance of rescue, but Jack and his group no longer care about rescue. They simply obey Jack.*



Ralph and Jack start to fight again, but Piggy asks to speak and Ralph relents. Piggy raises the **conch** and once more calls them all kids, and argues that it's better to be sensible than savage.

*Piggy makes one last appeal for civilization over savagery.*



Roger pushes a boulder from the fort. Ralph dives out of the way, but Piggy can't see without his glasses: the boulder hits him head on, and the **conch** explodes. The boulder pushes Piggy over the cliff onto the rocks below. Blood leaks from his head, and a wave pulls his dead body into the sea.

*Roger leaps into savager, destroying Intelligence and Law, in the form of Piggy and the conch. Only Ralph, symbol of government, remains.*



Stunned silence descends over the tribe. But suddenly Jack screams and throws his spear at Ralph, aiming to kill. Ralph runs into the jungle, dodging as more boys throw their spears at him.

*Jack also breaks completely free from civilization, and takes the rest of his tribe with him.*



The tribe brings Samneric into the fort. Jack prods them with his spear to terrorize them into joining his tribe. Roger brushes past Jack, making it clear that he knows how to inflict torture.

*Jack loves power, but Roger loves causing pain. Remember when he threw rocks at the littleun? Now he can torture for real.*



## CHAPTER 12

Ralph spies on Castle Rock from a hiding place in the forest. He thinks the boys have become savages and knows Jack will try to kill him.

*Jack must destroy Ralph for savagery to prevail over civilization.*



In the jungle, Ralph comes upon the skull of a pig hung on a spear staked into the ground. He punches it and the skull splits.

*The Lord of the Flies is a hollow skull: its true power exists within men.*



Ralph returns to spy on Castle Rock. Samneric are guarding the gates. He sneaks up to them. Frightened of Jack and Roger, Samneric beg Ralph to leave. But first they give him meat and tell him the tribe will hunt him tomorrow. Roger, they say, has sharpened a stick at both ends. Ralph doesn't understand what this means.

*The sharpened stick recalls the stick on which Jack's tribe staked the pig head. The tribe plans to hunt Ralph, the last symbol of civilization, like a pig and stake his head as an offering to the beast.*



Ralph tells Samneric he's going to hide in a nearby thicket so they can misdirect the tribe. As he runs off, he hears Samneric arguing with someone.

*Ralph still trusts Samneric as friends, as rational civilized people.*



The next morning Ralph hides in the thicket. But it's soon surrounded: Samneric have been tortured into revealing Ralph's location.

*As a civilized person, Ralph can't understand the power of torture.*



The tribe first rolls boulders at the thicket and then tries to storm it. They can't get in, so they set the thicket on **fire**. Ralph breaks from the thicket and runs into the jungle. The tribe follows, spreading out behind to search for him.

As the jungle burns, the tribe chases Ralph from hiding place to hiding place. He has no time to think or plan: he can only run or hide or attack.

The tribe slowly surrounds him, until Ralph is forced onto the open beach, where he'll surely be killed. But in front of him stands an officer of the British Navy. The smoke from the burning jungle caught the ship's attention.

The savages trickle out of the forest behind Ralph. The officer asks who's in charge. Ralph says he is. Jack is quiet. Percival Wemys Madison tries and fails to say his own name.

The officer asks if they're having a war, and jokingly asks if they've had any casualties. He's stunned when Ralph says two. The officer says he would have expected more from British boys. Ralph begins to cry, thinking of Piggy. All of the other boys begin to cry as well.

The officer, uncomfortable at this outpouring of emotion, turns to look at the more comforting sight of his warship anchored out at **sea**.

*Technology and fire, formerly symbols of civilization, have become tools of savagery, used to kill.*



*Hunted by the tribe like an animal, Ralph becomes an animal.*



*The fire the savages use to try to kill Ralph accomplishes what the signal fire couldn't—it attracts a rescue ship from civilization.*



*With civilization restored, Ralph regains leadership. Percival's failure to recall his name shows the depth of the boys' savagery.*



*The British pride themselves on being civilized. But Ralph cries because he's learned first hand just how fragile civilization is.*



*Hypocritical civilization: the officer prefers his warship (savagery) to facing human emotion.*





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