

Read the sections referenced below and answer the questions. Make your answers as detailed as possible, using short quotations to support your comments. NB Page numbers relate to the Faber Educational edition of the text (1962).

Chapter 1: The sound of the shell

Write about your first impressions of Jack:

- How does Golding use imagery to describe the choir? (pp.25-26)
- Describe Jack's physical appearance. (middle p.27)
- Write about the way Jack treats Piggy. (end p.28, middle p.32)
- How does Jack cope with not being voted for as chief? (pp.30-31)

Chapter 2: Fire on the mountain

Explore the different ways Jack, Piggy and Ralph react to:

- being stranded on the island (pp.44-45)
- making rules and obeying the conch (pp.43-44,54-55)
- the possibility of the existence of a beast (pp.47-48)
- building a signal fire (pp.49-54).

Chapter 3: Huts on the beach

Consider how Jack is presented by Golding, looking at:

- the language Golding uses to describe Jack when he is hunting (pp.61-63)
- the different priorities of Jack and Ralph and the developing conflict between them (pp.64-65, p.68)
- Jack's feelings about the possible existence of a beast (pp.66-67).

Read pp.70-72 where Simon goes into the forest alone. What do you think Simon's role is going to be in the novel? Look closely at the top of p.71 for a clue.



Chapter 4: Painted faces and long hair

Read pp.79-80:

- How and why does Jack's behaviour change when he paints his face?

Read pp.82-94:

- Describe Jack and the choir/hunters' behaviour and appearance as they return from their first successful hunt. (end pp.85-86)
- Do you think Jack is completely comfortable with the experience of killing things at this point? (pp.87-88)
- Does Jack's apology to Ralph relieve the tension between Ralph and him? (p.90)
- Describe the relationship between the boys at this point. (p.91)

Chapter 5: Beast from water

Read pp.102-117:

- Write about the different ways Ralph, Jack, Piggy and Simon respond to the idea of the existence of a 'beast' and the fear it brings. (pp.102-113)
- How do Piggy and Simon persuade Ralph to continue as chief? What does this conversation tell us about Jack? (pp.115-116)
- What is ironic about the boys' comments about 'grown-ups'? (p.117)

Chapter 6: Beast from air

Read pp.122-133 where the boys begin to search for the beast.

- Compare the different reactions of Ralph, Jack, Piggy and Simon to the idea of a beast.
- How does Jack challenge Ralph's authority? (p.126)
- Why does Jack like Castle Rock so much and what does Ralph not like about it? (pp.131-134)
- What is happening to Ralph 'in his head' at the end of p.133?

Chapter 7: Shadows and tall trees

Read pp.143-153:

- What do Robert, Roger and Jack's comments at the top of p.143 imply about the changes that are occurring in the boys?
- Comment on Jack's behaviour during the search for the beast.

Chapter 8: Gift for the darkness

Read pp.154-178 and think about:

- What tactics does Jack use to challenge Ralph's leadership and what is the outcome? (pp.159-158)
- Which of the boys have gone to join Jack's gang? (pp.162-166)
- What are Jack's plans for his gang? (pp.165-166)
- How is Jack feeling now that he is gaining some power?
- What do you notice about the language used to describe the killing of the sow? (pp.167-168)
- What does Jack do with the pig's head on a stick and why? (pp.169-170)
- Write about Jack's appearance when he and the others come to steal fire. (pp.173-4)
- How has Jack's language changed now that he is chief? (p.174).

Chapter 9: A view to a death

Read pp.179-190:

- What does Simon discover and what does he decide to do? (pp.179-183)
- Describe Jack now that he is chief. (pp.184-187)
- Why do the boys kill Simon? (pp.188-190)

Chapter 10: The shell and the glasses

Read pp.195-199 and consider:

- the presentation of Jack and how he is gathering power.

Then read pp.206-207:

- What did Piggy assume that Jack would want to steal? Why was he wrong?

Chapter 11: Castle Rock

Read pp.208-220, where Ralph's gang visit Jack's tribe:

- Examine the behaviour of Jack's tribe and write about what they have become, looking in detail at how Golding describes them.

Read pp.221-224 which describes the death of Piggy:

- Look at the description of Piggy's death and write about why his death is a fitting one.
- What happens to the conch and how is this symbolic?
- Look at Roger's behaviour and actions. What does he symbolise?
- Who do you find more threatening: Jack or Roger?

Chapter 12: Cry of the hunters

From your reading of Chapter 12, decide:

- What tactics does Jack use to catch Ralph?
- What do Jack and his tribe plan to do to Ralph when they catch him (clue: Roger has 'sharpened a stick at both ends')?
- How is Jack described as he approaches the naval officer (end p.247) and why does Golding describe him like this?
- How much do you think the naval officer understands about what has happened on the island?
- Why do you think Golding chose a naval officer as the boys' rescuer? What is happening to the world outside the island? What is Golding saying about human beings?
- Who and what does Ralph weep for? How has he changed from the beginning of the novel?
- Is this a happy ending?

Suggested answers

Chapter 1: The sound of the shell

- Golding uses images of darkness to describe the choir, of which Jack is the leader, as 'something dark ... fumbling along' which evokes a sense of evil. He metaphorically describes them as a 'creature', which conveys their movement as uniform and menacing.
- Jack is slim and tall. He has red hair and freckles, with pale blue eyes. His face is 'ugly without silliness'.
- Jack bullies and excludes Piggy from the start. He tells him to 'shut up' and when he starts to go on the expedition, Jack tells him cruelly, 'We don't want you'.
- Jack is embarrassed and ashamed at not being voted chief, 'Jack disappeared under a blush of mortification'.

Chapter 2: Fire on the mountain

- Jack immediately decides that they 'need an army' even though there are no other people on the island. This reaction tells us something about the kind of society the boys have come from. Piggy thinks the problem through in a pragmatic way and is frightened by the fact that 'Nobody knows where we are ... so we may be here a long time'. Ralph has an optimistic outlook; he believes they are on a 'good island' and he is imagining it will be like 'Coral Island' (a boys' adventure book from the 1930s) - an analogy that becomes ironic at the end of the novel.
- Jack is excited by the thought of controlling the boys on the island, 'We'll have rules!', and punishing them when they don't obey. Piggy needs the conch to be heard, 'I got the conch ... you let me speak'. Ralph introduces the idea of having "'Hands up" like at school' and using the conch to create order in a meeting.
- Jack agrees that there is no beast but reassures the boys that if there was, his hunters would 'hunt it and kill it'. Piggy insists the small boy has the conch to speak about the 'beastie'. Ralph is calm at first, explaining 'kindly' that the island is too small for 'beasties' but then, when the boys do not listen to him, he becomes frustrated, shouting 'But I tell you there isn't a beast!'
- Jack rushes off thoughtlessly and impulsively to build the fire. He snatches Piggy's glasses from him to start the fire. Piggy is 'disgusted' by the way the boys run off 'like a crowd of kids' to build the fire. The irony is that they are 'kids'! Ralph is caught up in the excitement; he is the leader but doesn't stop the fire from getting out of control.

Chapter 3: Huts on the beach

- Golding describes Jack as a 'furtive thing, ape-like', presenting him as a primitive being.
- Ralph is focused on keeping the boys safe and secure, 'We need shelters', whereas Jack is obsessed with catching a pig, 'We want meat'.
- Jack senses 'something's behind you all the time in the jungle'.
- Golding associates Simon with nature. He is kind to the littluns, reaching fruit that is out of reach and passing it to 'endless, outstretched hands'. This description evokes a Christ-like image, making us see Simon as a spiritual figure.

Chapter 4: Painted faces and long hair

- Jack becomes more primitive when he paints his face, 'the mask was a thing on its own behind which Jack hid, liberated from shame and self-consciousness'. The mask frees him from the constraints of civilised behaviour.
- Jack and his hunters return from the hunt 'chanting' and almost 'naked'.
- Jack is clearly not comfortable with killing yet because he 'twitched' when he told them he killed a pig and when he mentions the 'lashings of blood' he is 'shuddering'.
- Jack's apology to Ralph increases the tension because Ralph sees it as a 'verbal trick' not a genuine apology.
- Jack and Ralph's relationship is fragile at this point. Ralph is furious with Jack for letting the signal fire go out, thereby missing out on alerting the ship. Jack cannot understand Ralph's frustration as he is fired up by killing the pig. Ralph is becoming closer to the more sensible Piggy, 'Not even Ralph knew how a link between him and Jack had been snapped and fastened elsewhere'.

Chapter 5: Beast from water

- Ralph wants to 'talk about this fear' and dispel the boys' anxiety, making them 'happy' again. Jack says they need to 'put up with being frightened'. Piggy insists there isn't a beast. Practical as ever, he asks, 'What would a beast eat?' and how it could hide on such a small island. Simon perceptively suggests that the beast is 'only us'.
- Piggy and Simon persuade Ralph to go on being chief by pointing out Ralph is essential to controlling Jack's tyrannical nature, 'if you stand out of the way he'd hurt the next thing. And that's me.'
- The boys ask for a sign from the adult world, which is ironic considering the adults are no wiser, they are at war themselves.

Chapter 6: Beast from air

- Ralph admits he's frightened by the beast but calls a meeting, during which they decide to face their fears and look for the beast. Jack is excited by the idea, 'This'll be a real hunt'. Piggy is scared, 'Suppose the beast comes when you're all away. I can't see proper,' and he feels even more vulnerable. Simon 'felt a flicker of incredulity' about the beast and senses it is 'human' but 'heroic and sick' (the parachutist is a war hero but kills, so can be seen as 'sick').
- Jack challenges Ralph's authority by staying standing when Ralph tells him to sit down.
- Jack likes Castle Rock because it 'would make a wizard fort' but Ralph points out there is 'no shelter' and a lack of fresh water and food. Once again this highlights the difference between the priorities of these two leaders.
- Ralph is beginning to forget about the signal fire and being rescued, 'Something flittered there in front of his mind like a bat's wing, obscuring this idea'.

Chapter 7: Shadows and tall trees

- The boys' comments imply the boys are becoming more savage, forgetting about the rules that exist in a civilised society.
- Jack becomes more aggressive towards Ralph on the beast hunt because Ralph enters his world of hunting and is therefore seen by Jack as competition. Jack appears brave on the hunt but his body language shows his fear, 'shivering and croaking', and as they approach the beast, Jack brings up 'the rear, for all his brave words'.

Chapter 8: Gift for the darkness

- Jack challenges Ralph's leadership by criticising him. He accuses him of being 'like Piggy' (who is an outsider and not respected), not getting them meat and not being 'a prefect'. Finally, he asks for a vote of no confidence, 'Who thinks Ralph oughtn't be chief?'
- Maurice, Bill, Roger and Robert have joined Jack's gang.
- Jack says he wants his gang to 'forget about the beast'. However, when they kill and have a feast, he says they will leave the beast an offering from the kill. The implication here is that there is a beast and it needs appeasing.
- Jack is feeling 'brilliantly happy'.
- Golding uses sexual language to describe the boys' killing of the sow, 'The sow collapsed under them and they were heavy and fulfilled upon her'. This is to emphasise their loss of innocence. The boys have brutally killed a mother pig whilst she suckled her young. The act marks their savagery.
- Jack sharpens 'a stick at both ends' to place the pig's head on, as an offering to the beast. Again, this is ignorant, savage behaviour.
- Jack is 'stark naked save for paint and a belt'. He looks like a savage. His face is painted in white, green and red and Golding describes his appearance as 'demoniac' to evoke evil.
- His language has become monosyllabic, 'We hunt and feast and have fun', which emphasises his regression towards atavistic behaviour.

Chapter 9: A view to a death

- Simon discovers that the beast is 'part of' the boys when he hallucinates that the pig's head on a stick is talking to him. He decides to climb the mountain to discover the truth (climbing a mountain is an age-old symbol for the struggle to find the truth).
- Jack is a tyrant, 'Power lay in the brown swell of his forearms: authority sat on his shoulder and chattered in his ear like an ape'. He rules his tribe with the promise of food and the fear of the beast and himself.
- The boys kill Simon because they are in a frenzy. Jack suggests they chant and dance in a circle to allay their fears in the storm. Simon crawls down from the mountain and into the circle and tries to tell them the truth about the parachutist but the boys ignore him. Simon fills the circle, which yawns 'emptily', and the boys brutally murder him in a fit of hysteria, 'There were no words, no movements, but the tearing of teeth and claws'.

Chapter 10: The shell and the glasses

- Jack is presented as the primitive chief to a tribe of savages. He rules with fear, discouraging discussion and encouraging hatred and suspicion. For example, when a 'savage' asks why the 'others' (meaning Ralph and his gang) would want to 'sneak' in, Jack claims 'They'll try to spoil things we do'. He tortures boys for no reason, like Wilfred, who's been 'tied up for hours, waiting'. Golding hints at Jack's evil nature by describing his tongue as 'a triangle of startling pink', evoking a snake.
- Piggy assumed Jack would want to steal the conch, the symbol of freedom of speech and democracy. However, Jack does not value the conch because he is a dictator who does not listen to his people.

Chapter 11: Castle Rock

- Jack's tribe have become a group of savages; they are no longer described as boys. They are 'freed by the paint' on their faces and they have tied their hair back. They are aggressive, calling to each other with a 'war-cry', and Golding describes them as a group who act as one and therefore have diminished responsibility for what they do, 'The shivering, silvery, unreal laughter of the savages sprayed out and echoed away'. The sibilance in this sentence evokes the terrifying evil this faceless group of boys is capable of.
- Piggy's death is fitting because it is described pragmatically, 'His head opened and stuff came out and turned red'; the language is straightforward and scientific, like Piggy himself. He is likened to a pig, one of the more intelligent animals but still an animal. Golding is saying that if we deny our spiritual nature, as Piggy does, then that is all we are: a rational, intelligent animal.
- When Piggy dies, the conch is smashed 'into a thousand white fragments'. Golding is demonstrating how easily democracy can be overthrown.
- Roger is a mindless savage and now that there is no civilisation to keep him in check, he is free to act as he wishes. He is Jack's henchman and tortures the boys 'wielding a nameless authority'. In the end, he murders Piggy. He symbolises the evil man can do if not controlled by a civilised society.

Chapter 12: Cry of the hunters

- Jack plans to capture Ralph by spreading the savages in a line across the island and driving him into a corner. Eventually, Jack lights a fire to smoke Ralph out.
- They plan to kill Ralph. Furthermore, the implication of the stick 'sharpened at both ends' is that they will eat him and give his head to the beast as a sacrificial offering.
- Golding describes Jack as 'a little boy' to remind us that these are children. Even children have to fight the evil within.
- The naval officer can see the chaos, the smoke and the state of the boys but he imagines it has been like 'Coral Island', taking us back to Ralph's hopes for innocent adventure at the beginning of the novel (see Chapter 2).
- Golding chose a naval officer to emphasise the belligerent nature of mankind. The boys are being rescued and taken back to a world where the adults are at war themselves.
- Ralph weeps 'for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy'. Ralph was innocent at the beginning of the novel but now he understands the potential for evil that exists in human nature.
- This is certainly not a happy ending. 'The trim cruiser in the distance' is a menacing reminder of the world at war to which the boys are returning.