

Chapter 1

Summary

A fair-haired boy lowers himself down some rocks toward a lagoon on a beach. At the lagoon, he encounters another boy, who is chubby, intellectual, and wears thick glasses. The fair-haired boy introduces himself as Ralph and the chubby one introduces himself as Piggy. Through their conversation, we learn that in the midst of a war, a transport plane carrying a group of English boys was shot down over the ocean. It crashed in thick jungle on a deserted island. Scattered by the wreck, the surviving boys lost each other and cannot find the pilot.

Ralph and Piggy look around the beach, wondering what has become of the other boys from the plane. They discover a large pink- and cream-colored conch shell, which Piggy realizes could be used as a kind of makeshift trumpet. He convinces Ralph to blow through the shell to find the other boys. Summoned by the blast of sound from the shell, boys start to straggle onto the beach. The oldest among them are around twelve; the youngest are around six. Among the group is a boys' choir, dressed in black gowns and led by an older boy named Jack. They march to the beach in two parallel lines, and Jack snaps at them to stand at attention. The boys taunt Piggy and mock his appearance and nickname.

The boys decide to elect a leader. The choirboys vote for Jack, but all the other boys vote for Ralph. Ralph wins the vote, although Jack clearly wants the position. To placate Jack, Ralph asks the choir to serve as the hunters for the band of boys and asks Jack to lead them. Mindful of the need to explore their new environment, the Ralph chooses Jack and a choir member named Simon to explore the island, ignoring Piggy's whining requests to be picked. The three explorers leave the meeting place and set off across the island.

The prospect of exploring the island exhilarates the boys, who feel a bond forming among them as they play together in the jungle. Eventually, they reach the end of the jungle, where high, sharp rocks jut toward steep mountains. The boys climb up the side of one of the steep hills. From the peak, they can see that they are on an island with no signs of civilization. The view is stunning, and Ralph feels as though they have discovered their own land. As they travel back toward the beach, they find a wild pig caught in a tangle of vines. Jack, the newly appointed hunter, draws his knife and steps in to kill it, but hesitates, unable to bring himself to act. The pig frees itself and runs away, and Jack vows that the next time he will not flinch from the act of killing. The three boys make a long trek through dense jungle and eventually emerge near the group of boys waiting for them on the beach.

Chapter 2

Summary

When the explorers return, Ralph sounds the conch shell, summoning the boys to another meeting on the beach. He tells the group that there are no adults on the island and that they need to organize a few things to look after themselves. Jack reminds Ralph of the pig they found trapped in the vines in the jungle, and Ralph agrees that they will need hunters to kill animals for meat. Ralph declares that, at meetings, the conch shell will be used to determine which boy has the right to speak. Whoever holds the conch shell will speak, and the others will listen silently until they receive the shell in their turn. Jack agrees with this idea.

Piggy yells about the fact that no one knows they have crashed on the island and that they could be stuck there for a long time. The prospect of being stranded for a long period is too harrowing for many of the boys, and the entire group becomes silent and scared. One of the younger children, a small boy with a mulberry-colored mark on his face, claims that he saw a snakelike "beastie" or monster the night before. A wave of fear ripples through the group at the idea that a monster might be prowling the island. Though they are frightened, the older boys try to reassure the group that there is no monster. The older boys say that the little boy's vision was only a nightmare.

Thinking about the possibility of rescue, Ralph proposes that the group build a large signal fire on top of the island's central mountain, so that any passing ships might see the fire and know that someone is trapped on the island. Excited by the thought, the boys rush off to the mountain, while Ralph and Piggy lag behind. Piggy continues to whine about the childishness and stupidity of the group.

The boys collect a mound of dead wood and use the lenses from Piggy's glasses to focus the sunlight and set the wood on fire. They manage to get a large fire going, but it quickly dies down. Piggy angrily declares that the boys need to act more proficiently if they want to get off the island, but his words carry little weight. Jack volunteers his group of hunters to be responsible for keeping the signal fire going. In their frenzied, disorganized efforts to rekindle the fire, the boys set a swath of trees ablaze. Enraged at the group's reckless disorganization, Piggy tells them furiously that one of the littlest boys—the same boy who told them about the snake-beast—was playing over by the fire and now is missing. The boys are crestfallen and shocked, and Ralph is struck with shame. They pretend that nothing has happened.

Chapter 3

Summary

Carrying a stick sharpened into a makeshift spear, Jack trails a pig through the thick jungle, but it evades him. Irritated, he walks back to the beach, where he finds Ralph and Simon at work building huts for the younger boys to live in. Ralph is irritated because the huts keep falling down before they are completed and because, though the huts are vital to the boys' ability to live on the island, none of the other boys besides Simon will help him. As Ralph and Simon work, most of the other boys splash about and play in the lagoon. Ralph gripes that few of the boys are doing any work. He says that all the boys act excited and energized by the plans they make at meetings, but none of them is willing to work to make the plans successful. Ralph points out that Jack's hunters have failed to catch a single pig. Jack claims that although they have so far failed to bring down a pig, they will soon have more success. Ralph also worries about the smaller children, many of whom have nightmares and are unable to sleep. He tells Jack about his concerns, but Jack, still trying to think of ways to kill a pig, is not interested in Ralph's problems.

Ralph, annoyed that Jack, like all the other boys, is unwilling to work on the huts, implies that Jack and the hunters are using their hunting duties as an excuse to avoid the real work. Jack responds to Ralph's complaints by commenting that the boys want meat. Jack and Ralph continue to bicker and grow increasingly hostile toward each other. Hoping to regain their sense of camaraderie, they go swimming together in the lagoon, but their feelings of mutual dislike remain and fester.

In the meantime, Simon wanders through the jungle alone. He helps some of the younger boys—whom the older boys have started to call "littluns"—reach fruit hanging from a high branch. He walks deeper into the forest and eventually finds a thick jungle glade, a peaceful, beautiful open space full of flowers, birds, and butterflies. Simon

looks around to make sure that he is alone, then sits down to take in the scene, marveling at the abundance and beauty of life that surrounds him.

Chapter 4

Summary

Life on the island soon develops a daily rhythm. Morning is pleasant, with cool air and sweet smells, and the boys are able to play happily. By afternoon, though, the sun becomes oppressively hot, and some of the boys nap, although they are often troubled by bizarre images that seem to flicker over the water. Piggy dismisses these images as mirages caused by sunlight striking the water. Evening brings cooler temperatures again, but darkness falls quickly, and nighttime is frightening and difficult.

The littluns, who spend most of their days eating fruit and playing with one another, are particularly troubled by visions and bad dreams. They continue to talk about the "beastie" and fear that a monster hunts in the darkness. The large amount of fruit that they eat causes them to suffer from diarrhea and stomach ailments. Although the littluns' lives are largely separate from those of the older boys, there are a few instances when the older boys torment the littluns. One vicious boy named Roger joins another boy, Maurice, in cruelly stomping on a sand castle the littluns have built. Roger even throws stones at one of the boys, although he does remain careful enough to avoid actually hitting the boy with his stones.

Jack, obsessed with the idea of killing a pig, camouflages his face with clay and charcoal and enters the jungle to hunt, accompanied by several other boys. On the beach, Ralph and Piggy see a ship on the horizon—but they also see that the signal fire has gone out. They hurry to the top of the hill, but it is too late to rekindle the flame, and the ship does not come for them. Ralph is furious with Jack, because it was the hunters' responsibility to see that the fire was maintained.

Jack and the hunters return from the jungle, covered with blood and chanting a bizarre song. They carry a dead pig on a stake between them. Furious at the hunters' irresponsibility, Ralph accosts Jack about the signal fire. The hunters, having actually managed to catch and kill a pig, are so excited and crazed with bloodlust that they barely hear Ralph's complaints. When Piggy shrilly complains about the hunters' immaturity, Jack slaps him hard, breaking one of the lenses of his glasses. Jack taunts Piggy by mimicking his whining voice. Ralph and Jack have a heated conversation. At last, Jack admits his responsibility in the failure of the signal fire but never apologizes to Piggy. Ralph goes to Piggy to use his glasses to light a fire, and at that moment, Jack's friendly feelings toward Ralph change to resentment. The boys roast the pig, and the hunters dance wildly around the fire, singing and reenacting the savagery of the hunt. Ralph declares that he is calling a meeting and stalks down the hill toward the beach alone.

Chapter 5

Summary

As Ralph walks along the beach, he thinks about how much of life is an improvisation and about how a considerable part of one's waking life is spent watching one's feet. Ralph is frustrated with his hair, which is now long, mangy, and always manages to fall in front of his eyes. He decides to call a meeting to attempt to bring the group back into line. Late in the evening, he blows the conch shell, and the boys gather on the beach. At the meeting place, Ralph grips the conch shell and berates the boys for their failure to uphold the group's rules. They have not done anything required of them: they refuse to work at building shelters, they do not gather drinking

water, they neglect the signal fire, and they do not even use the designated toilet area. He restates the importance of the signal fire and attempts to allay the group's growing fear of beasts and monsters. The littluns, in particular, are increasingly plagued by nightmare visions. Ralph says there are no monsters on the island. Jack likewise maintains that there is no beast, saying that everyone gets frightened and it is just a matter of putting up with it. Piggy seconds Ralph's rational claim, but a ripple of fear runs through the group nonetheless.

One of the littluns speaks up and claims that he has actually seen a beast. When the others press him and ask where it could hide during the daytime, he suggests that it might come up from the ocean at night. This previously unthought-of explanation terrifies all the boys, and the meeting plunges into chaos. Suddenly, Jack proclaims that if there is a beast, he and his hunters will hunt it down and kill it. Jack torments Piggy and runs away, and many of the other boys run after him. Eventually, only Ralph, Piggy, and Simon are left. In the distance, the hunters who have followed Jack dance and chant.

Piggy urges Ralph to blow the conch shell and summon the boys back to the group, but Ralph is afraid that the summons will go ignored and that any vestige of order will then disintegrate. He tells Piggy and Simon that he might relinquish leadership of the group, but his friends reassure him that the boys need his guidance. As the group drifts off to sleep, the sound of a littlun crying echoes along the beach.

Chapter 6

Summary

In the darkness late that night, Ralph and Simon carry a littlun back to the shelter before going to sleep. As the boys sleep, military airplanes battle fiercely above the island. None of the boys sees the explosions and flashes in the clouds because the twins Sam and Eric, who were supposed to watch the signal fire, have fallen asleep. During the battle, a parachutist drifts down from the sky onto the island, dead. His chute becomes tangled in some rocks and flaps in the wind, while his shape casts fearful shadows on the ground. His head seems to rise and fall as the wind blows.

When Sam and Eric wake up, they tend to the fire to make the flames brighter. In the flickering firelight, they see the twisted form of the dead parachutist and mistake the shadowy image for the figure of the dreaded beast. They rush back to the camp, wake Ralph, and tell him what they have seen. Ralph immediately calls for a meeting, at which the twins reiterate their claim that a monster assaulted them. The boys, electrified and horrified by the twins' claims, organize an expedition to search the island for monsters. They set out, armed with wooden spears, and only Piggy and the littluns remain behind.

Ralph allows Jack to lead the search as the group sets out. The boys soon reach a part of the island that none of them has ever explored before—a thin walkway that leads to a hill dotted with small caves. The boys are afraid to go across the walkway and around the ledge of the hill, so Ralph goes to investigate alone. He finds that, although he was frightened when with the other boys, he quickly regains his confidence when he explores on his own. Soon, Jack joins Ralph in the cave.

The group climbs the hill, and Ralph and Jack feel the old bond between them rekindling. The other boys begin to play games, pushing rocks into the sea, and many of them lose sight of the purpose of their expedition. Ralph angrily reminds them that they are looking for the beast and says that they must return to the other mountain so that they can rebuild the signal fire. The other boys, lost in whimsical plans to build a fort and do other things on the new hill, are displeased by Ralph's commands but grudgingly obey.

Chapter 7

Summary

The boys stop to eat as they travel toward the mountain. Ralph gazes disconsolately at the choppy ocean and muses on the fact that the boys have become slovenly and undisciplined. As he looks out at the vast expanse of water, he feels that the ocean is like an impenetrable wall blocking any hope the boys have of escaping the island. Simon, however, lifts Ralph's spirits by reassuring him that he will make it home.

That afternoon, the hunters find pig droppings, and Jack suggests they hunt the pig while they continue to search for the beast. The boys agree and quickly track a large boar, which leads them on a wild chase. Ralph, who has never been on a hunt before, quickly gets caught up in the exhilaration of the chase. He excitedly flings his spear at the boar, and though it glances off the animal's snout, Ralph is thrilled with his marksmanship nonetheless. Jack holds up his bloodied arm, which he claims the boar grazed with its tusks.

Although the boar escapes, the boys remain in a frenzy in the aftermath of the hunt. Excited, they reenact the chase among themselves with a boy named Robert playing the boar. They dance, chant, and jab Robert with their spears, eventually losing sight of the fact that they are only playing a game. Beaten and in danger, Robert tries to drag himself away. The group nearly kills Robert before they remember themselves. When Robert suggests that they use a real boar in the game next time, Jack replies that they should use a littlun instead. The boys laugh, delighted and stirred up by Jack's audacity. Ralph tries to remind everyone that they were only playing a game. Simon volunteers to return to the beach to tell Piggy and the littluns that the group will not return until late that night.

Darkness falls, and Ralph proposes that they wait until morning to climb the mountain because it will be difficult to hunt the monster at night. Jack challenges Ralph to join the hunt, and Ralph finally agrees to go simply to regain his position in the eyes of the group. Ralph, Roger, and Jack start to climb the mountain, and then Ralph and Roger wait somewhere near the top while Jack climbs alone to the summit. He returns, breathlessly claiming to have seen the monster. Ralph and Roger climb up to have a look and see a terrifying specter, a large, shadowy form with the shape of a giant ape, making a strange flapping sound in the wind. Horrified, the boys hurry down the mountain to warn the group.

Chapter 8

Summary

The next morning, the news of the monster has the boys in a state of uproar as they gather on the beach. Piggy, who was not on the mountain the night before, is baffled by the other boys' claims to have seen the monster. Jack seizes the conch shell and blows into it clumsily, calling for an assembly. Jack tells the others that there is definitely a beast on the mountain and goes on to claim that Ralph is a coward who should be removed from his leadership role. The other boys, however, refuse to vote Ralph out of power. Enraged, Jack storms away from the group, saying that he is leaving and that anyone who likes is welcome to join him.

Deeply troubled, Ralph does not know what to do. Piggy, meanwhile, is thrilled to see Jack go, and Simon suggests that they all return to the mountain to search for the beast. The other boys are too afraid to act on his suggestion, however. Ralph slips into a depression, but Piggy cheers him up with an idea: they should build a new signal fire, on the beach rather than on the mountain. Piggy's idea restores Ralph's hope that they will be rescued. The boys set to

work and build a new fire, but many of them sneak away into the night to join Jack's group. Piggy tries to convince Ralph that they are better off without the deserters.

Along another stretch of sand, Jack gathers his new tribe and declares himself the chief. In a savage frenzy, the hunters kill a sow, and Roger drives his spear forcefully into the sow's anus. Then the boys leave the sow's head on a sharpened stake in the jungle as an offering to the beast. As they place the head upright in the forest, the black blood drips down the sow's teeth, and the boys run away.

As Piggy and Ralph sit in the old camp discussing the deserters, the hunters from Jack's tribe descend upon them, shrieking and whooping. The hunters steal burning sticks from the fire on the beach. Jack tells Ralph's followers that they are welcome to come to his feast that night and even to join his tribe. The hungry boys are tempted by the idea of pig's meat.

Just before Jack's tribe raids the beach, Simon slips away from the camp and returns to the jungle glade where he previously sat marveling at the beauty of nature. Now, however, he finds the sow's head impaled on the stake in the middle of the clearing. Simon sits alone in the clearing, staring with rapt attention at the impaled pig's head, which is now swarming with flies. The sight mesmerizes him, and it even seems as if the head comes to life. The head speaks to Simon in the voice of the "Lord of the Flies," ominously declaring that Simon will never be able to escape him, for he lies within all human beings. He also promises to have some "fun" with Simon. Terrified and troubled by the apparition, Simon collapses in a faint.

Chapter 9

Summary

Simon awakens and finds the air dark and humid with an approaching storm. His nose is bleeding, and he staggers toward the mountain in a daze. He crawls up the hill and, in the falling light, sees the dead pilot with his flapping parachute. Watching the parachute rise and fall with the wind, Simon realizes that the boys have mistaken this harmless object for the deadly beast that has plunged their entire group into chaos. When Simon sees the corpse of the parachutist, he begins to vomit. When he is finished, he untangles the parachute lines, freeing the parachute from the rocks. Anxious to prove to the group that the beast is not real after all, Simon stumbles toward the distant light of the fire at Jack's feast to tell the other boys what he has seen.

Piggy and Ralph go to the feast with the hopes that they will be able to keep some control over events. At the feast, the boys are laughing and eating the roasted pig. Jack sits like a king on a throne, his face painted like a savage, languidly issuing commands, and waited on by boys acting as his servants. After the large meal, Jack extends an invitation to all of Ralph's followers to join his tribe. Most of them accept, despite Ralph's attempts to dissuade them. As it starts to rain, Ralph asks Jack how he plans to weather the storm considering he has not built any shelters. In response, Jack orders his tribe to do its wild hunting dance.

Chanting and dancing in several separate circles along the beach, the boys are caught up in a kind of frenzy. Even Ralph and Piggy, swept away by the excitement, dance on the fringes of the group. The boys again reenact the hunting of the pig and reach a high pitch of frenzied energy as they chant and dance. Suddenly, the boys see a shadowy figure creep out of the forest—it is Simon. In their wild state, however, the boys do not recognize him. Shouting that he is the beast, the boys descend upon Simon and start to tear him apart with their bare hands and teeth. Simon tries desperately to explain what has happened and to remind them of who he is, but he trips and plunges over the rocks onto the beach. The boys fall on him violently and kill him.

The storm explodes over the island. In the whipping rain, the boys run for shelter. Howling wind and waves wash Simon's mangled corpse into the ocean, where it drifts away, surrounded by glowing fish. At the same time, the wind blows the body of the parachutist off the side of the mountain and onto the beach, sending the boys screaming into the darkness.

Chapter 10

Summary

The next morning, Ralph and Piggy meet on the beach. They are bruised and sore and feel awkward and deeply ashamed of their behavior the previous night. Piggy, who is unable to confront his role in Simon's death, attributes the tragedy to mere accident. But Ralph, clutching the conch desperately and laughing hysterically, insists that they have been participants in a murder. Piggy whiningly denies the charge. The two are now virtually alone; everyone except Sam and Eric and a handful of littluns has joined Jack's tribe, which is now headquartered at the Castle Rock, the mountain on the island.

At the Castle Rock, Jack rules with absolute power. Boys are punished for no apparent reason. Jack ties up and beats a boy named Wilfred and then warns the boys against Ralph and his small group, saying that they are a danger to the tribe. The entire tribe, including Jack, seems to believe that Simon really was the beast, and that the beast is capable of assuming any disguise. Jack states that they must continue to guard against the beast, for it is never truly dead. He says that he and two other hunters, Maurice and Roger, should raid Ralph's camp to obtain more fire and that they will hunt again tomorrow.

The boys at Ralph's camp drift off to sleep, depressed and losing interest in the signal fire. Ralph sleeps fitfully, plagued by nightmares. They are awakened by howling and shrieking and are suddenly attacked by a group of Jack's hunters. The hunters badly beat Ralph and his companions, who do not even know why they were assaulted, for they gladly would have shared the fire with the other boys. But Piggy knows why, for the hunters have stolen his glasses, and with them, the power to make fire.

Chapter 11

Summary

The next morning, Ralph and his few companions try to light the fire in the cold air, but the attempt is hopeless without Piggy's glasses. Piggy, squinting and barely able to see, suggests that Ralph hold a meeting to discuss their options. Ralph blows the conch shell, and the boys who have not gone to join Jack's tribe assemble on the beach. They decide that their only choice is to travel to the Castle Rock to make Jack and his followers see reason. Ralph decides to take the conch shell to the Castle Rock, hoping that it will remind Jack's followers of his former authority. Once at Jack's camp, however, Ralph's group encounters armed guards. Ralph blows the conch shell, but the guards tell them to leave and throw stones at them, aiming to miss. Suddenly, Jack and a group of hunters emerge from the forest, dragging a dead pig. Jack and Ralph immediately face off. Jack commands Ralph to leave his camp, and Ralph demands that Jack return Piggy's glasses. Jack attacks Ralph, and they fight. Ralph struggles to make Jack understand the importance of the signal fire to any hope the boys might have of ever being rescued, but Jack orders his hunters to capture Sam and Eric and tie them up. This sends Ralph into a fury, and he lunges at Jack.

Ralph and Jack fight for a second time. Piggy cries out shrilly, struggling to make himself heard over the brawl. As Piggy tries to speak, hoping to remind the group of the importance of rules and rescue, Roger shoves a massive rock down the mountainside. Ralph, who hears the rock falling, dives and dodges it. But the boulder strikes Piggy, shatters the conch shell he is holding, and knocks him off the mountainside to his death on the rocks below. Jack throws his spear at Ralph, and the other boys quickly join in. Ralph escapes into the jungle, and Roger and Jack begin to torture Sam and Eric, forcing them to submit to Jack's authority and join his tribe.

Chapter 12

Summary

Ralph hides in the jungle and thinks miserably about the chaos that has overrun the island. He thinks about the deaths of Simon and Piggy and realizes that all vestiges of civilization have been stripped from the island. He stumbles across the sow's head, the Lord of the Flies, now merely a gleaming white skull—as white as the conch shell, he notes. Angry and disgusted, Ralph knocks the skull to the ground and takes the stake it was impaled on to use as a weapon against Jack.

That night, Ralph sneaks down to the camp at the Castle Rock and finds Sam and Eric guarding the entrance. The twins give him food but refuse to join him. They tell him that Jack plans to send the entire tribe after him the next day. Ralph hides in a thicket and falls asleep. In the morning, he hears Jack talking and torturing one of the twins to find out where Ralph is hiding. Several boys try to break into the thicket by rolling a boulder, but the thicket is too dense. A group of boys tries to fight their way into the thicket, but Ralph fends them off. Then Ralph smells smoke and realizes that Jack has set the jungle on fire in order to smoke him out. Ralph abandons his hiding place and fights his way past Jack and a group of his hunters. Chased by a group of body-painted warrior-boys wielding sharp wooden spears, Ralph plunges frantically through the undergrowth, looking for a place to hide. At last, he ends up on the beach, where he collapses in exhaustion, his pursuers close behind.

Suddenly, Ralph looks up to see a naval officer standing over him. The officer tells the boy that his ship has come to the island after seeing the blazing fire in the jungle. Jack's hunters reach the beach and stop in their tracks upon seeing the officer. The officer matter-of-factly assumes the boys are up to, as he puts it, "fun and games." When he learns what has happened on the island, the officer is reproachful: how could this group of boys, he asks—and English boys at that—have lost all reverence for the rules of civilization in so short a time? For his part, Ralph is overwhelmed by the knowledge that he has been rescued, that he will escape the island after coming so close to a violent death. He begins to sob, as do the other boys. Moved and embarrassed, the naval officer turns his back so that the boys may regain their composure.