

# Lord of the Flies

## Background Info

### Author Bio

**Full Name:** William Golding

**Date of Birth:** 1911

**Place of Birth:** Cornwall, England

**Date of Death:** 1993

**Brief Life Story:** 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.

### Key Facts

**Full Title:** *Lord of the Flies*

**Genre:** Allegorical novel / Adventure novel

**Setting:** A deserted tropical island in the middle of a nuclear world war

**Climax:** Piggy's death

**Protagonist:** Ralph

**Antagonists:** Jack and the Lord of the Flies

**Point of View:** Third person omniscient

### Historical and Literary Context

**Where Written:** England

**When Published:** 1954

**Literary Period:** Post-war fiction

**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.

**Related Historical Events:** 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."

### 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.

## Characters

**Note:** *Lord of the Flies* is an allegory, a literary genre in which characters symbolize abstract ideas. The list below describes the characters and, when applicable, states what they symbolize. The terms "biguns" and "littluns" refer to the older and younger boys on the island. All the main characters are "biguns." Only a few "littluns," about age 10 and younger, appear as characters in the novel.

**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 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.*

**The Lord of the Flies** – The pig head that **Jack's** hunters stake into the ground and leave as an offering to the beast. **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 Lord of the Flies symbolizes the evil in all men's souls, and is also covered in the Symbols section.*

**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.

**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.

## Themes

In LitCharts, each theme gets its own corresponding color, which you can use to track where the themes occur in the work. There are two ways to track themes:

- Refer to the color-coded bars next to each plot point throughout the *Summary and Analysis* sections.
- Use the *ThemeTracker* section to get a quick overview of where the themes appear throughout the entire work.

### 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.

### 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 boy's 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 of 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.

**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 are shown in **red** text whenever they appear in the *Plot Summary* and *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 head of a pig staked into the ground. It symbolizes the evil that lies within every person.

### 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 boy's 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.

# Summary and Analysis

The color-coded bars in *Summary and Analysis* make it easy to track the themes through the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section. For instance, a bar of  indicates that all five themes apply to that part of the summary.

## 1. The Sound of the Shell

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 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.*



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.

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



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.

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



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.

*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.*



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 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.*



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.

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



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."

*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.*



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.

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



## 2. The Fire on the Mountain

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.

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



**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.

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



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

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



**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.

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



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 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."*



### 3. Huts on the Beach

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.

*Savagery again clashes with civilization.*



**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.

*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.*



**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.

*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.*



**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.

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



### 4. Painted Faces and Long Hair

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.

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



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.

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



**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.

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



**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.

*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.*



### 5. Beast from Water

**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 littlun'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 littlun 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 littlun 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 standoff.*



**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.*



## 6. Beast From Air

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.*



## 7. Shadows and Tall Trees

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.

*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.*



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**.

*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.*



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.

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



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**.

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



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

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



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.

*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 beast's physical existence.*



## 8. Gift for the Darkness

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 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.

*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.*



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**.

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



**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.

*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.*



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**.

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



**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.

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



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.

*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.*



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**.

*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** 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.

*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.*



**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.

*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.*



## 9. A View to a Death

**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 mountain-top, 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.*



## 10. The Shell and the Glasses

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.

*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** 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 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?*



**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.

*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.*



## 11. Castle Rock

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**.

*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.*



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

*Civilization still has a hold on Roger.*



**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.

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



**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."

*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 savagery, 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.*



## 12. Cry of the Hunters

**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.

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



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.

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



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



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.

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



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



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

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



## Important Quotes

### 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!"

"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."

### 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.

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!"

### 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.

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

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.

### Chapter 5 Quotes

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

### 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.

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?

### Chapter 12 Quotes

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

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.

## ThemeTracker™

The LitCharts ThemeTracker is a mini-version of the entire LitChart. The ThemeTracker provides a quick timeline-style rundown of all the important plot points and allows you to track the themes throughout the work at a glance.

Themes	Chapter	
	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A plane carrying school boys is shot down onto a desert island during wartime. All the adults are killed.</li> <li><b>Ralph</b> and <b>Piggy</b> find and blow the <b>conch</b>. All the boys gather.</li> <li><b>Ralph</b> is elected leader over <b>Jack</b>. Ralph makes Jack the head of the hunters.</li> <li><b>Ralph</b> explores the <b>island</b> with <b>Jack</b> and <b>Simon</b>. They spot a pig, but are unable to kill it.</li> </ul>
	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At a second assembly, <b>Ralph</b> makes rules, says that the island is a good island, and dismisses some of the younger boys' fears of a "<b>beastie</b>" as just a nightmare.</li> <li>The boys make a signal <b>fire</b>, using <b>Piggy's glasses</b> to light it. They accidentally burn a patch of the forest.</li> <li><b>Piggy</b> scolds the boys for acting childish. <b>Jack</b> mocks Piggy, then volunteers his hunters to keep the <b>fire</b> lit at all times.</li> <li>The boy who saw the "beastie" disappears.</li> </ul>
	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Jack</b> grows obsessed with hunting, but is unable to kill any pigs.</li> <li>Only <b>Simon</b> helps <b>Ralph</b> build the shelters on the beach. Ralph and <b>Jack</b> start to argue about whether hunting or building shelters is more important, and only barely avoid coming to blows.</li> <li>As <b>Jack</b> and <b>Ralph</b> argue, <b>Simon</b> slips away and meditates in a secret forest glade.</li> </ul>
	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Roger</b> throws rocks at a littleun, but purposely misses by a few feet.</li> <li><b>Jack</b> calls <b>Roger</b> into the forest. Jack, Roger, and other boys paint their faces and then go hunting.</li> <li><b>Jack's</b> hunters kill a pig, but they neglect the signal which goes out just as a ship is passing. <b>Ralph</b> and <b>Jack</b> argue. Humiliated, Jack mocks and hits <b>Piggy</b>, breaking a lens of <b>Piggy's glasses</b>. Everyone laughs at Piggy. Ralph realizes that he and Piggy are now allies.</li> <li><b>Jack</b> and his hunters do a dance re-enacting the killing of the pig. <b>Ralph</b> calls an assembly and walks away.</li> </ul>
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before the assembly, <b>Ralph</b> wishes he was as smart as <b>Piggy</b>.</li> <li>During the assembly, <b>Jack</b> mocks the littleuns who fear the <b>beast</b>. <b>Piggy</b> agrees that there is no beast.</li> <li>The littleun <b>Percival</b> says the <b>beast</b> comes from the <b>sea</b>. <b>Simon</b> says maybe the boys themselves are the beast. The boys don't understand what he's talking about.</li> <li>As the meeting descends into chaos, <b>Jack</b> questions <b>Ralph's</b> leadership, says he will hunt the <b>beast</b> and kill it, and then starts a wild dancing chant.</li> <li><b>Ralph</b> and <b>Piggy</b> wish there were adults around. Ralph wishes, at the very least, that the adults would send them a sign.</li> </ul>
	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is an airplane fight over the island. The boys all sleep through it. A dead parachutist lands on the mountain next to the signal <b>fire</b>. <b>Samneric</b>, on duty tending the fire, think the parachutist is the <b>beast</b>.</li> <li>The boys call an assembly. <b>Jack</b> nearly ousts <b>Ralph</b> as leader, but Ralph wins the boys to his side by asking whether they all want to be rescued or not.</li> <li>All the biguns except Piggy search the <b>island</b>. They don't find the beast, but they do discover Castle Rock, which <b>Jack</b> thinks would make a great fort.</li> </ul>
	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The boys hike to the mountain. <b>Simon</b> predicts <b>Ralph</b> will "get back alright."</li> <li><b>Ralph</b> kills a wild boar with a spear. The boys do a ritual dance, and for a moment it seems as if they might actually kill the boy playing the boar.</li> <li><b>Ralph</b>, <b>Jack</b>, and <b>Roger</b> climb the mountain at night. The wind blows and moves the parachutist, convincing them that it is the <b>beast</b>. The boy runs.</li> </ul>
	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Jack</b> calls an assembly, then insists on a vote to make him chief instead of <b>Ralph</b>. Ralph wins unanimously. Jack storms off.</li> <li><b>Ralph</b> and <b>Piggy</b> start a new signal <b>fire</b> on the beach. But while they work, all of the biguns except <b>Samneric</b> slink off to join <b>Jack</b>. <b>Simon</b> goes to his secret glade.</li> <li><b>Jack</b> is chief of the new tribe of biguns. His tribe kills a pig, then stakes the pig's head on a stick sharpened at both ends and leave it as an offering to the <b>beast</b>.</li> <li><b>Jack's</b> tribe raids fire from the new signal <b>fire</b> on the beach. Jack invites everyone to his feast.</li> <li><b>Simon</b> witnesses the killing of the pig, then the pig's head, the <b>Lord of the Flies</b>, speaks to him: "I'm the Beast ... You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you?"</li> </ul>
	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Simon</b> climbs the mountain and learns the truth—that the <b>beast</b> is just a dead parachutist.</li> <li>At <b>Jack's</b> feast, it starts to rain. <b>Ralph</b> mocks Jack for failing to build shelters. Jack whips the boys into the ritual pig-killing dance. Even Ralph and <b>Piggy</b> join in.</li> <li><b>Simon</b> emerges from the forest to tell the other boys about the parachutist. The boys, now a frenzied mob, kill Simon.</li> </ul>
	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ralph</b> and <b>Piggy</b>, realize that the "beast" they killed was <b>Simon</b>. When <b>Samneric</b> show up, all four boys claim not to have been at the feast when the dance started.</li> <li><b>Jack's</b> group raids <b>Ralph's</b> camp. <b>Piggy</b> protects the <b>conch</b>. Jack's tribe steals <b>Piggy's glasses</b>.</li> </ul>
	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ralph</b>, <b>Piggy</b>, and <b>Samneric</b> go to Castle Rock to confront <b>Jack</b> and his tribe. Samneric are captured. Ralph and Jack fight, but not to kill.</li> <li><b>Piggy</b> insists on speaking. He holds up the conch and argues that it's better to be sensible than savage. <b>Roger</b> rolls a boulder that knocks <b>Piggy</b> into the sea and kills him, and also destroys the <b>conch</b>.</li> <li><b>Jack</b> throws his spear at <b>Ralph</b>, aiming to kill. Ralph runs into the forest. The tribe takes Samneric into the fort. Roger tortures them into joining the tribe.</li> </ul>
	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Ralph</b> spies on Castle Rock and speaks with <b>Samneric</b>. They tell him that the tribe plans to hunt him, and that <b>Roger</b> has sharpened a stick at both ends.</li> <li><b>Jack's</b> tribe hunts <b>Ralph</b> and sets the forest on <b>fire</b> to smoke Ralph out. The tribe eventually surrounds Ralph and forces him into the open on the beach.</li> <li>The huge <b>fire</b> has attracted a British Naval ship to the island. An <b>officer</b> is standing on the beach.</li> <li>The <b>officer</b> thinks the boys are playing games, and is shocked when he learns that there have been two deaths. <b>Ralph</b> and the other boys cry. The officer, uncomfortable at this show of emotion, looks at his warship.</li> </ul>

## Theme Key

Human Nature

Civilization

Savagery and the "Beast"

Spirituality and Religion

The Weak and the Strong