Lord of the Flies Chapter 1-8 Summaries

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, 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.

Analysis

Lord of the Flies dramatizes the conflict between the civilizing instinct and the barbarizing instinct that exist in all human beings. The artistic choices Golding makes in the novel are designed to emphasize the struggle between the ordering elements of society, which include morality, law, and culture, and the chaotic elements of humanity's savage animal instincts, which include anarchy, bloodlust, the desire for power, amorality, selfishness, and violence. Over the course of the novel, Golding portrays the rise and swift fall of an isolated, makeshift civilization, which is torn to pieces by the savage instincts of those who compose it.

In this first chapter, Golding establishes the parameters within which this civilization functions. To begin with, it is populated solely with boys—the group of young English schoolboys shot down over the tropical island where the novel takes place. The fact that the characters are only boys is significant: the young boys are only half formed, perched between civilization and savagery and thus embodying the novel's central conflict. Throughout the novel, Golding's foundation is the idea that moral and societal constraints are learned rather than innate—that the human tendency to obey rules, behave peacefully, and follow orders is imposed by a system that is not in itself a fundamental part of human nature. Young boys are a fitting illustration of this premise, for they live in a constant state of tension with regard to the rules and regulations they are expected to follow. Left to their own devices, they often behave with instinctive cruelty and violence. In this regard, the civilization established in *Lord of the Flies*—a product of preadolescent boys' social instincts—seems endangered from the beginning.

In Chapter 1, the boys, still unsure of how to behave with no adult presence overseeing them, largely stick to the learned behaviors of civilization and order. They attempt to re-create the structures of society on their deserted island: they elect a leader, establish a division of labor, and set about systematically exploring the island. But even at this early stage, we see the danger that the boys' innate instincts pose to their civilization: the boys cruelly taunt Piggy, and Jack displays a ferocious desire to be elected the group's leader.

Throughout *Lord of the Flies,* Golding makes heavy use of symbols to present the themes and dramatic conflicts of the novel. In this chapter, for instance, Golding introduces the bespectacled Piggy as a representative of the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization. Piggy thinks critically about the conch shell and determines a productive use for it—summoning the other boys to the beach. The

conch shell itself is one of the most important symbols in the novel. The conch shell represents law, order, and political legitimacy, as it summons the boys from their scattered positions on the island and grants its holder the right to speak in front of the group. Later in the novel, Golding sharply contrasts the conch shell with another natural object—the sinister pig's head known as the Lord of the Flies, which comes to symbolize primordial chaos and terror.

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.

Analysis

The conflict between the instincts of civilization and savagery emerges quickly within the group: the boys, especially Piggy, know that they must act with order and forethought if they are to be rescued, but the longer they remain apart from the society of adults, the more difficult it becomes for them to adhere to the disciplined behavior of civilization. In Chapter 1, the boys seem determined to re-create the society they have lost, but as early as Chapter 2, their instinctive drive to play and gratify their immediate desires undermines their ability to act collectively. As a result, the signal fire nearly fails, and a young boy apparently burns to death when the forest catches fire. The constraints of society still linger around the boys, who are confused and ashamed when they learn the young boy is missing—a sign that a sense of morality still guides their behavior at this point.

Golding's portrayals of the main characters among the group of boys contributes to the allegorical quality of *Lord of the Flies,* as several of the boys stand for larger concepts. Ralph, the protagonist of the novel, stands for civilization, morality, and leadership, while Jack, the antagonist, stands for the desire for power, selfishness, and amorality. Piggy represents the scientific and intellectual aspects of civilization, as his glasses—a symbol of rationality and intellect—enable the boys to light fires. Already the boys' savage instincts lead them to value strength and charisma above intelligence: although Piggy has a great deal to offer the boys' fledgling civilization, they see him as a whiny weakling and therefore despise him and refuse to listen to him, even when his ideas are good. For instance, when Piggy suggests that the boys find a way to improve their chances of being rescued, they ignore him; only when the stronger and more charismatic Ralph suggests the same thing do they agree to make the signal fire.

Apart from the boys themselves, the signal fire and the"beastie" also carry symbolic significance. The signal fire serves as a barometer for the boys' interest in maintaining ties to civilization: as long as it burns, they retain some hope that they will be rescued and returned to society, but as they become increasingly obsessed with power and killing, they lose interest in the fire. When the fire ultimately burns out, the boys' disconnection from the structures of society is complete. Meanwhile, the beast the young boy claims to have seen also emerges as

an important symbol in the novel. At this point, the beast is merely an idea that frightens some of the boys. But as the novel progresses, all the boys tacitly accept the beast's existence. The beast comes to represent the instincts of power, violence, and savagery that lurk within each human being.

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.

Analysis

The personal conflict between Ralph and Jack mirrors the overarching thematic conflict of the novel. The conflict between the two boys brews as early as the election in Chapter 1 but remains hidden beneath the surface, masked by the camaraderie the boys feel as they work together to build a community. In this chapter, however, the conflict erupts into verbal argument for the first time, making apparent the divisions undermining the boys' community and setting the stage for further, more violent developments. As Ralph and Jack argue, each boy tries to give voice to his basic conception of human purpose: Ralph advocates building huts, while Jack champions hunting. Ralph, who thinks about the overall good of the group, deems hunting frivolous. Jack, drawn to the exhilaration of hunting by his bloodlust and desire for power, has no interest in building huts and no concern for what Ralph thinks. But because Ralph and Jack are merely children, they are unable to state their feelings articulately.

At this point in the novel, the conflict between civilization and savagery is still heavily tilted in favor of civilization. Jack, who has no real interest in the welfare of the group, is forced to justify his desire to hunt rather than build huts by claiming that it is for the good of all the boys. Additionally, though most of the boys are more interested in play than in work, they continue to re-create the basic structures of civilization on the island. They even begin to develop their own language, calling the younger children "littluns" and the twins Sam and Eric "Samneric."

Simon, meanwhile, seems to exist outside the conflict between Ralph and Jack, between civilization and savagery. We see Simon's kind and generous nature through his actions in this chapter. He helps Ralph build the huts when the other boys would rather play, indicating his helpfulness, discipline, and dedication to the common good. Simon helps the littluns reach a high branch of fruit, indicating his kindness and sympathy—a sharp contrast to many of the older boys, who would rather torment the littluns than help them. When Simon sits alone in the jungle glade marveling at the beauty of nature, we see that he feels a basic connection with the natural world. On the whole, Simon seems to have a basic goodness and kindness that comes from within him and is tied to his connection with nature. All the other boys, meanwhile, seem to have inherited their ideas of goodness and morality from the external forces of civilization, so that the longer they are away from human society, the more their moral sense erodes. In this regard, Simon emerges as an important figure to contrast with Ralph and Jack. Where Ralph represents the orderly forces of civilization and Jack the primal, instinctual urges that react against such order, Simon represents a third quality—a kind of goodness that is natural or innate rather than taught by human society. In this way, Simon,

who cannot be categorized with the other boys, complicates the symbolic structure of *Lord of the Flies.*

Chapter 4

"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."

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.

Analysis

At this point in the novel, the group of boys has lived on the island for some time, and their society increasingly resembles a political state. Although the issue of power and control is central to the boys' lives from the moment they elect a leader in the first chapter, the dynamics of the society they form take time to develop. By this chapter, the boys' community mirrors a political society, with the faceless and frightened littluns resembling the masses of common people and the various older boys filling positions of power and importance with regard to these underlings. Some of the older boys, including Ralph and especially Simon, are kind to the littluns; others, including Roger and Jack, are cruel to them. In short, two conceptions of power emerge on the island, corresponding to the novel's philosophical poles—civilization and savagery. Simon, Ralph, and Piggy represent the idea that power should be used for the good of the group and the protection of the littluns—a stance representing the instinct toward civilization, order, and morality. Roger and Jack represent the idea that power should enable those who hold it to gratify their own desires and act on their impulses, treating the littluns as servants or objects for their own amusement—a stance representing the instinct toward savagery.

As the tension between Ralph and Jack increases, we see more obvious signs of a potential struggle for power. Although Jack has been deeply envious of Ralph's power from the moment Ralph was elected, the two do not come into open conflict until this chapter, when Jack's irresponsibility leads to the failure of the signal fire. When the fire—a symbol of the boys' connection to civilization—goes out, the boys' first chance of being rescued is thwarted. Ralph flies into a rage, indicating that he is still governed by desire to achieve the good of the whole group. But Jack, having just killed a pig, is too excited by his success to care very much about the missed chance to escape the island. Indeed, Jack's bloodlust and thirst for power have overwhelmed his interest in civilization. Whereas he previously justified his

commitment to hunting by claiming that it was for the good of the group, now he no longer feels the need to justify his behavior at all. Instead, he indicates his new orientation toward savagery by painting his face like a barbarian, leading wild chants among the hunters, and apologizing for his failure to maintain the signal fire only when Ralph seems ready to fight him over it.

The extent to which the strong boys bully the weak mirrors the extent to which the island civilization disintegrates. Since the beginning, the boys have bullied the whiny, intellectual Piggy whenever they needed to feel powerful and important. Now, however, their harassment of Piggy intensifies, and Jack begins to hit him openly. Indeed, despite his position of power and responsibility in the group, Jack shows no qualms about abusing the other boys physically. Some of the other hunters, especially Roger, seem even crueler and less governed by moral impulses. The civilized Ralph, meanwhile, is unable to understand this impulsive and cruel behavior, for he simply cannot conceive of how physical bullying creates a self-gratifying sense of power. The boys' failure to understand each other's points of view creates a gulf between them—one that widens as resentment and open hostility set in.

Chapter 5

"What I mean is . . . maybe it's only us."

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.

Analysis

The boys' fear of the beast becomes an increasingly important aspect of their lives, especially at night, from the moment the first littlun claims to have seen a snake-monster in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the fear of the beast finally explodes, ruining Ralph's attempt to restore order to the island and precipitating the final split between Ralph and Jack. At this point, it remains uncertain whether or not the beast actually exists. In any case, the beast serves as one of the most important symbols in the novel, representing both the terror and the allure of the primordial desires for violence, power, and savagery that lurk within every human soul. In keeping with the overall allegorical nature of *Lord of the Flies,* the beast can be interpreted in a number of different lights. In a religious reading, for instance, the beast recalls the devil; in a Freudian reading, it can represent the id, the instinctual urges and desires of the human unconscious mind. However we interpret the beast, the littlun's idea of the monster rising from the sea terrifies the boys because it represents the beast's emergence from their own unconscious minds. As Simon realizes later in the novel, the beast is not necessarily something that exists outside in the jungle. Rather, it already exists inside each boy's mind and soul, the capacity for savagery and evil that slowly overwhelms them.

As the idea of the beast increasingly fills the boys with dread, Jack and the hunters manipulate the boys' fear of the beast to their own advantage. Jack continues to hint that the beast exists when he knows that it probably does not—a manipulation that leaves the rest of the group fearful and more willing to cede power to Jack and his hunters, more willing to overlook barbarism on Jack's part for the sake of maintaining the "safety" of the group. In this way, the beast indirectly becomes one

of Jack's primary sources of power. At the same time, Jack effectively enables the boys themselves to act as the beast—to express the instinct for savagery that civilization has previously held in check. Because that instinct is natural and present within each human being, Golding asserts that we are all capable of becoming the beast.

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.

Analysis

As fear about the beast grips the boys, the balance between civilization and savagery on the island shifts, and Ralph's control over the group diminishes. At the beginning of the novel, Ralph's hold on the other boys is quite secure: they all understand the need for order and purposive action, even if they do not always want to be bothered with rules. By this point, however, as the conventions of civilization begin to erode among the boys, Ralph's hold on them slips, while Jack becomes a more powerful and menacing figure in the camp. In Chapter 5, Ralph's attempt to reason with the boys is ineffective; by Chapter 6, Jack is able to manipulate Ralph by asking him, in front of the other boys, whether he is frightened. This question forces Ralph to act irrationally simply for the sake of preserving his status among the other boys. This breakdown in the group's desire for morality, order, and civilization is increasingly enabled—or excused—by the presence of the monster, the beast that has frightened the littluns since the beginning of the novel and that is quickly assuming an almost religious significance in the camp.

The air battle and dead parachutist remind us of the larger setting of *Lord of the Flies*: though the boys lead an isolated life on the island, we know that a bloody war is being waged elsewhere in the world—a war that apparently is a terrible holocaust. All Golding tells us is that atom bombs have threatened England in a war against "the reds" and that the boys were evacuated just before the impending destruction of their civilization. The war is also responsible for the boys' crash landing on the island in the first place, because an enemy aircraft gunned down their transport plane. Although the war remains in the background of *Lord of the Flies,* it is nevertheless an important extension of the main themes of the novel. Just as the boys struggle with the conflict between civilization and savagery on the island, the outside world is gripped in a similar conflict. War represents the savage outbursts of civilization, when the desire for violence and power overwhelms the desire for order and peace. Even though the outside world has bestowed upon the boys a sense of morality and order, the danger of savagery remains real even within the context of that seemingly civilized society that has nurtured them.

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.

Analysis

The boar hunt and the game the boys play afterward provide stark reminders of the power of the human instinct toward savagery. Before this point in the novel, Ralph has been largely baffled about why the other boys were more concerned with hunting, dancing, bullying, and feasting than with building huts, maintaining the signal fire, and trying to be rescued. But when he joins the boar hunt in this chapter, Ralph is unable to avoid the instinctive excitement of the hunt and gets caught up in the other boys' bloodlust. In this scene, Golding implies that every individual, however strong his or her instinct toward civilization and order, has an

undeniable, innate drive toward savagery as well. After the hunt, the boys'reenactment of the chase provides a further reminder of the inextricable connection between the thrill of the hunt and the desire for power. Robert, the boy who stands in for the boar in the reenactment, is nearly killed as the other boys again get caught up in their excitement and lose sight of the limits of the game in their mad desire to kill. Afterward, when Jack suggests killing a littlun in place of a pig, the group laughs. At this point, probably none of them—except possibly Jack and Roger—would go so far as to actually carry out such a plan. Nonetheless, the fact that the boys find the possibility exciting rather than horrifying is rather unsettling.

By this point, the conflict between Ralph and Jack has escalated to a real struggle for power, as Jack's brand of violence and savagery almost completely replaces Ralph's disciplined community in the boys' conception of their lives on the island. Ralph's exhilaration in the hunt and his participation in the ritual that nearly kills Robert is, in a sense, a major victory for Jack, for the experience shakes Ralph's confidence in his own instinct toward morality and order. As befits a power struggle in a savage group, the conflict between Ralph and Jack manifests itself not as a competition to prove who would be the better leader but instead as a competition of sheer strength and courage. Just as Ralph boldly climbed the hill alone to prove his bravery in the previous chapter, Jack goes up the mountain alone now. It is also significant that Ralph discovers nothing, while Jack discovers what he thinks is the beast: while Ralph does not believe in the beast, the beast constitutes a major part of Jack's picture of life on the island.

Jack increases his leverage within the group by goading Ralph into acting rashly and unwisely, against his tendency toward levelheadedness—a manipulation that weakens Ralph's position in the group. Although Ralph realizes that it is foolish to hunt the beast at night, he knows that, in a society that values strength, he cannot risk appearing to be a coward. As a result, he assents to going up the mountainside at night. Ultimately, Ralph's decision to explore the mountain at night costs him the opportunity to prove to the others that Sam and Eric did not see the beast: had the boys climbed the mountain in the daylight as Ralph wished, they would have seen the dead parachutist for what it was. Because they go at night, however, they see the parachutist distorted by shadows and believe it to be the beast. In a sense, the degree to which each boy is prone to see the beast mirrors the degree to which he gives in to his instinct toward savagery. This connection emphasizes the idea that the beast is a symbolic manifestation of the boys'primitive inner instincts.

Chapter 8

"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!"

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.

Analysis

The excitement the boys felt when Jack suggests killing a littlun in Chapter 7 comes to grotesque fruition in Chapter 8, during the vicious and bloody hunt following Jack's rise to power and formation of his new tribe. Jack's ascent arises directly from the supposed confirmation of the existence of the beast. Once the boys, having mistaken the dead parachutist for a monster, come to believe fully in the existence of the beast, all the remaining power of civilization and culture on the island diminishes rapidly. In a world where the beast is real, rules and morals become weak and utterly dispensable. The original democracy Ralph leads devolves into a cult-like totalitarianism, with Jack as a tyrant and the beast as both an enemy and a revered god. We see the depth of the boys' growing devotion to the idea of the beast in their impalement of the sow's head on the stake as an offering to the beast. No longer simply a childish nightmare, the beast assumes a primal, religious importance in the boys' lives. Jack uses the beast ingeniously to rule his savage kingdom, and each important character in *Lord of the Flies* struggle to come to terms with the beast. Piggy, who remains steadfastly scientific and rational at this point in the novel, is simply baffled and disgusted. Ralph, who has seen what he thinks is the beast, is listless and depressed, unsure of how to reconcile his civilized ideals with the sight he saw on the mountaintop. But the most complex reaction of all comes from one of the novel's most complex characters—Simon.

Simon's confrontation with the Lord of the Flies—the sow's head impaled on a stake in the forest glade—is arguably the most important scene in the novel, and one that has attracted the most attention from critics. Some critics have interpreted the scene as a retelling of Jesus' confrontation with Satan during his forty days in the wilderness, a story originally told in the Gospels of the New Testament. Indeed, many critics have described Simon as a Christ figure, for he has a mystical connection to the environment, possesses a saintly and selfless disposition, and meets a tragic and sacrificial death. Others tie the scene into a larger Freudian reading of *Lord of the Flies,* claiming that its symbols correspond exactly to the elements of the Freudian unconscious (with Jack as the id, Ralph as the ego, and Piggy as the superego). *Lord of the Flies* may indeed support these and a number of other readings, not necessarily at the exclusion of one another.

Indeed, many differences between Simon and Jesus complicate the comparison between the two and prevent us from seeing Simon as a straightforward Christ figure. Simon, unlike Jesus, is not a supernatural being, and none of the boys could possibly find salvation from the Lord of the Flies through faith in Simon. Rather, Simon's terror and fainting spell indicate the horrific, persuasive power of the instinct for chaos and savagery that the Lord of the Flies represents. Simon has a deep human insight in the glade, for he realizes that it is not a real, physical beast that inspires the hunters' behavior but rather the barbaric instinct that lies deep within each of them. Fearing that this instinct lies embedded within himself as well, Simon seems to hear the Lord of the Flies speaking with him, threatening him with what he fears the most. Unable to stand the sight any longer, Simon collapses into a very human faint.

In all, Simon is a complex figure who does not fit neatly into the matrix framed by Jack at the one end and Ralph at the other. Simon is kindhearted and firmly on the side of order and civilization, but he is also intrigued by the idea of the beast and feels a deep connection with nature and the wilderness on the island. Whereas Jack and Roger connect with the wilderness on a level that plunges them into primal lust and violence, Simon finds it a source of mystical comfort and joy. Simon's closeness with nature and his unwaveringly kind nature throughout the novel make him the only character who does not feel morality as an artificial imposition of society. Instead, we sense that Simon's morality and goodness are a way of life that proceeds directly and easily from nature. *Lord of the Flies* is deeply preoccupied with the problem of fundamental, natural human evil—amid which Simon is the sole figure of fundamental, natural good. In a wholly nonreligious way, Simon complicates the philosophical statement the novel makes about human beings, for he represents a completely separate alternative to the spectrum between civilization and savagery of which Ralph and Jack are a part. In the end, Simon is both natural and good in a world where such a combination seems impossible.