

Lord of the flies chapter 4-6 summary



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

----- Chapter 4 Summary Life on the island soon develops a daily rhythm. Morning is pleasant, with cool air and sweet smells, and the boys are able to play happily. By afternoon, though, the sun becomes oppressively hot, and some of the boys nap, although they are often troubled by bizarre images that seem to flicker over the water. Piggy dismisses these images as mirages caused by sunlight striking the water. Evening brings cooler temperatures again, but darkness falls quickly, and nighttime is frightening and difficult.

The littluns, who spend most of their days eating fruit and playing with one another, are particularly troubled by visions and bad dreams. They continue to talk about the “beastie” and fear that a monster hunts in the darkness. The large amount of fruit that they eat causes them to suffer from diarrhea and stomach ailments. Although the littluns’ lives are largely separate from those of the older boys, there are a few instances when the older boys torment the littluns. One vicious boy named Roger joins another boy, Maurice, in cruelly stomping on a sand castle the littluns have built.

Roger even throws stones at one of the boys, although he does remain careful enough to avoid actually hitting the boy with his stones. Jack, obsessed with the idea of killing a pig, camouflages his face with clay and charcoal and enters the jungle to hunt, accompanied by several other boys. On the beach, Ralph and Piggy see a ship on the horizon—but they also see that the signal fire has gone out. They hurry to the top of the hill, but it is too late to rekindle the flame, and the ship does not come for them. Ralph is furious with Jack, because it was the hunters’ responsibility to see that the fire was maintained.

Jack and the hunters return from the jungle, covered with blood and chanting a bizarre song. They carry a dead pig on a stake between them. Furious at the hunters' irresponsibility, Ralph accosts Jack about the signal fire. The hunters, having actually managed to catch and kill a pig, are so excited and crazed with bloodlust that they barely hear Ralph's complaints. When Piggy shrilly complains about the hunters' immaturity, Jack slaps him hard, breaking one of the lenses of his glasses. Jack taunts Piggy by mimicking his whining voice. Ralph and Jack have a heated conversation.

At last, Jack admits his responsibility in the failure of the signal fire but never apologizes to Piggy. Ralph goes to Piggy to use his glasses to light a fire, and at that moment, Jack's friendly feelings toward Ralph change to resentment. The boys roast the pig, and the hunters dance wildly around the fire, singing and reenacting the savagery of the hunt. Ralph declares that he is calling a meeting and stalks down the hill toward the beach alone. 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 crueller 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 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.